# ENCOUNTER

LITERATURE ARTS POLITICS

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*Dylan Thomas*

VIRTUE AND THE CENSOR
*Bertrand Russell*

THOUGHTS ON PAINTING
*Lucian Freud*

BALAAM AND THE ASS
*W. H. Auden*

ARTICLES AND REVIEWS

*A. J. Ayer, Daniel J. Boorstin, Vilem Bernard, Irving Kristol, Erik de Mauny, George Mikes, Stephen W. Pollak, S. Rajee, Philip Sherrard, C. V. Wedgwood*

POETRY AND FICTION

*Jack Curtis, Louis MacNeice, Iris Origo, R. S. Thomas, Vernon Scannell, Anthony Thwaite*



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*Dylan Thomas*

# Reminiscences of Childhood

I WAS born in a large Welsh industrial town at the beginning of the Great War: an ugly, lovely town (or so it was, and is, to me), crawling, sprawling, slummed, unplanned, jerry-villa'd and smug-suburbed by the side of a long and splendid-curving shore where truant boys and sandfield boys and old, anonymous men in the tatters and hangovers of a hundred charity suits beachcombed, idled, and paddled, watched the dock-bound boats, threw stones into the sea for the barking, outcast dogs, and, on Saturday summer afternoons, listened to the militant music of Salvation and hell-fire preached from a soapbox.

This sea-town was my world; outside, a *strange* Wales, coal-pitted, mountained, river-run, full, so far as I knew, of choirs and sheep and storybook tall hats, moved about its business which was none of mine; beyond that unknown Wales lay England, which was London, and a country called "The Front" from which many of our neighbours never came back. At the beginning, the only "front" I knew was the little lobby before our front door; I could not understand how so many people never returned from there; but later I grew to know more, though still without understanding, and carried a wooden rifle in Cwmdonkin Park and shot down the invisible, unknown enemy like a flock of wild birds. And the Park itself was a world within the world of the sea-town; quite near where I lived, so near that, on summer evenings, I could listen, in my bed, to the voices of other children playing ball on the sloping, paper-littered bank; the Park was full of terrors and treasures. The face of one old man who sat, summer and winter, on the same bench looking over the swanned reservoir, I can see more clearly, I think, than the city-street faces I saw an *hour* ago: and many years later I wrote a poem about, and for, this never by me to be forgotten "Hunchback In The Park."



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*The hunchback in the park,*
*A solitary mister*
*Propped between trees and water*
*From the opening of the garden lock*
*That let the trees and water enter*
*Until the Sunday-sombre bell at dark.*

*Eating bread from a newspaper,*
*Drinking water from the chained cup*
*That the children filled with gravel*
*In the fountain basin where I sailed my ship,*
*Slept at night in a dog-kennel*
*But nobody chained him up.*

*Like the park birds he came early,*
*Like the water he sat down,*
*And Mister, they called, Hey Mister*
*The truant boys from the town*
*Running when he had heard them clearly*
*On out of sound,*

*Past lake and rockery,*
*Laughing when he shook his paper,*
*Through the loud zoo of the willow groves,*

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Peake

*Drawings by Mervyn Peake*

*Hunchbacked in mockery*
*Dodging the park-keeper*
*With his stick that picked up leaves.*

*And the old dog sleeper,*
*Alone between nurses and swans*
*While the boys among willows*
*Made the tigers jump out of their eyes*
*To roar on the rockery stones*
*And the groves were blue with sailors,*

*Made all day until bell-time*
*A woman figure without fault*
*Straight as a young elm*
*Straight and tall from his crooked bones*
*That she might stand in, the night*
*After the locks and the chains*

*All night in the unmade park*
*After the railings and shrubberies,*
*The birds, the grass, the trees and the lake,*
*And the wild boys innocent as strawberries,*
*Had followed the hunchback*
*To his kennel in the dark.*

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And that Park grew up with me; that small, interior world widened as I learned its names and its boundaries; as I discovered new refuges and ambushes in its miniature woods and jungles, hidden homes and lairs for the multitudes of the young, for cowboys and Indians and, most sinister of all, for the far-off race of the Mormons, a people who every night rode on nightmares through my bedroom. In that small, iron-railed universe of rockery, gravel-path, playbank, bowling-green, bandstand, reservoir, chrysanthemum garden, where an ancient keeper known as Smokey was the tyrannous and whiskered snake in the Grass one must Keep Off, I endured, with pleasure, the first agonies of unrequited love, the first slow boiling in the belly of a bad poem, the strutting and raven-locked self-dramatisation of what, at the time, seemed incurable adolescence. I wrote then, in a poem never to be published:

*See, on gravel paths under the harpstrung trees,*
*Feeling the summer wind, hearing the swans,*
*Leaning from windows over a length of lawns,*
*On tumbling hills admiring the sea,*
*I am alone, alone complain to the stars.*
*Who are his friends? The wind is his friend,*
*The glow-worm lights his darkness, and*
*The snail tells of coming rain.*

But before that, several years even before those lines, that cry from a *very* happy heart waiting, like an egg, to be broken, I had written:

*Where could I ever listen for the sound of seas asleep,*
*Or the cold and graceful song of a swan that dies and wakes,*
*Where could I ever hear the cypress speak in its sleep,*
*And cling to a manhood of flowers, and sing the unapproachable lakes?*

I am afraid the answer was, the Park. (I had "the swan" on the brain in those days; luckily, there were very few rhymes for "parrot.") The answer was, the Park; a bit of bush and flower-bed and lawn in a snug, smug, trim, middling-prosperous suburb of my utterly confining outer world, that splendidly ugly sea-town where, with my friends, I used to dawdle on half-holidays along the bent and Devon-facing seashore, hoping for corpses or gold watches or the skull of a sheep or a message in a bottle to be washed up in the wreck; or where we used to wander, whistling and being rude to strangers, through the packed streets, stale as station sandwiches, around the impressive gasworks and the slaughterhouse, past the blackened monuments of civic pride and the museum, which should have been in a museum; where we scratched at a kind of cricket on the bald and cindery surface of the Recreation-ground, or winked at unapproachably old girls of fifteen or sixteen on the Promenade opposite; where we took a tram that shook like an iron jelly down from our neat homes to the gaunt pier, there to clamber *under* the pier, hanging perilously on its skeleton-legs; or to run along to the end where patient men with the seaward eyes of the dockside unemployed, capped and mufflered, dangling from their mouths pipes that had long gone out, angled over the edge for

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unpleasant-tasting fish. Never *was* there such a town as ours, I thought, as we fought on the sandhills with the boys that our mothers called "common," or dared each other up the scaffoldings of half-built houses, soon to be called Laburnums or the Beeches, near the residential districts where the solider business families "dined" at half-past seven and never drew the curtains. Never *was* there such a town (I thought) for the smell of fish-and-chips on Saturday nights; for the Saturday afternoon cinema-matinees where we shouted and hissed our threepences away; for the crowds in the streets, with leeks in their pockets, on International Nights, for the singing that gushed from the smoky doorways of the pubs in the quarters we never should have visited; for the Park, the Park, the inexhaustibly ridiculous and mysterious, the bushy Red-Indian-hiding Park, where the hunchback sat alone, images of perfection in his head, and "the groves were blue with sailors."

The recollections of childhood have no order; of all those every-coloured and shifting scented shoals that move below the surface of the moment of recollection, one, two, indiscriminately, suddenly, dart up out of their revolving waters into the present air: immortal flying fish.

So I remember that never was there such a dame-school as ours; so firm and kind and smelling of goloshes, with the sweet and fumbled music of the piano-lessons drifting down from upstairs to the lonely schoolroom where only the sometimes tearful wicked sat over undone sums or to repent a little crime, the pulling of a girl's hair during geography, the sly shin-kick under the table during prayers. Behind the school was a narrow lane where the oldest and boldest threw pebbles at windows, scuffled and boasted, lied about their relations—"My father's got a chauffeur"; "What's he want a chauffeur for, he hasn't got a car"; "My father's the richest man in Swansea." "My father's the richest man in Wales." "My father's the richest man in the world,"—and smoked the butt-ends of cigarettes, turned green, went home, and had little appetite for tea.

The lane was the place to tell your secrets; if you did not have any, you invented them; I had few. Occasionally, now, I dream that I am turning, after school, into the lane of confidences where I say to the children of my class, "At last I have a secret." "What is it? What is it?" "I can fly!" And when they do not believe me, I flap my arms like a large, stout bird and slowly leave the ground, only a few inches at first, then gaining air until I fly, like Dracula in a schoolboy cap, level with the windows of the school, peering in until the mistress at the piano screams, and the metronome falls with a clout to the ground, stops, and there is no more Time; and I fly over the trees and chimneys of my town, over the dockyards, skimming the masts and funnels; over Inkerman Street and Sebastopol Street and the street of the man-capped women hurrying to the Jug and Bottle with a fish-frail full of empties; over the trees of the eternal Park where a brass band shakes the leaves and sends them showering down on to the nurses and the children, the cripples and the out-of-work. This is only a dream. The ugly, lovely, at least to me, town is alive, exciting and real though war has made a hideous hole in it. I do not need to remember a dream. The reality is there. The fine, live people, the spirit of Wales itself.

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*Bertrand Russell*

# Virtue and the Censor

CENSORSHIP of literature, which has existed in some form in all modern civilised countries, has two main purposes: one is to prevent people thinking about politics, and the other is to prevent them thinking about sex. On the whole, it has performed the first of these tasks more successfully than the second. In many countries with a severe political censorship, the Government has succeeded in making ordinary men and women forget all about politics, until there is a revolution which, owing to the previous censorship, necessarily falls into the hands of politically uneducated people. In England, however, thinking about politics has been considered virtuous ever since the 17th century, except for a brief period during the French Revolution. But England has not been behind other countries in putting legal weapons into the hands of prurient elderly bigots in the hope that these weapons will suffice to deter the young from thinking or knowing about sex.

In addition to the Common Law prohibition of obscene publications there are two statutes: one concerning the sale of such publications, and the other concerning their distribution through the Post Office. The first of these is the Obscene Publications Act of 1857 which authorises any person, who thinks that a bookseller is selling some work that the person in question considers obscene, to complain to a Magistrate or to a Justice of the Peace. The Magistrate is then justified in issuing a search warrant which leads to the book being seized, and it rests with the owner to prove that it is not obscene. If the Magistrate is not convinced, the book is destroyed. The other Statute is the Post Office Act of 1908, which makes it an offence to send obscene matter by post.

Both of these statutes are liable to abuse and have in fact had ridiculous consequences. I think most English readers will be surprised by the fact that the view taken as to what is obscene is more illiberal in England than it is in the United States. Havelock Ellis' *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* and Joyce's *Ulysses* were both banned in this country, but not in America. It is clear that any attempt at a legal definition of obscenity must encounter great difficulties, since the whole conception is vague and varies with the age and with the standard of education. The legal test, as given by Chief Justice Cockburn in 1868, is "whether the tendency of the matter charged as obscenity is to deprave or corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences and into whose hands a publication of this sort might fall." This means, in practice, that any publication is legally obscene if it happens to shock the particular Magistrate who is trying the case. I have myself heard a birth-control pamphlet condemned as obscene on several grounds, one of which was a suggestion that possibly women might enjoy sexual intercourse. I looked at the Magistrate and realised that such a suggestion must run counter to his experience. It is no defence to point out that the publication in question has a public object in view—e.g. the prevention of over-population. Nor is it permissible to preach virtue, if its opposite is at all carefully delineated. A Magistrate, even if he



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is ignorant, stupid, and almost illiterate, has the power to ban whatever shocks him.

The subject has been brought to public notice by a recent case in the Isle of Man, where Boots' Library was prosecuted for circulating two supposedly obscene novels. In consequence of this case, I have read these two novels, which I should not otherwise have done. One of them is about a man who indulges in affairs, although he is happily married. The man is represented as rendered unhappy by his vicious proclivities, and as realising that they must bring him to disaster sooner or later. It is, I should say, a complete moral tract to be commended for its edifying quality, whatever one may think of its literary merit. The other novel is even more high-toned. It is about a simple-minded American from a virtuous New England village who has the misfortune to fall in love with an English aristocratic lady of easy virtue. At last, after many misfortunes due to his guilty passion, he suddenly undergoes a complete moral reformation, under the influence of which he replaces adultery by murder. Since everyone knows that it is worse to break the Seventh Commandment than the Sixth, this novel must be reckoned morally elevating.

IN regard to most matters it is thought that knowledge about them conduces to sound judgement. There are, however, two exceptions: one is Communism and the other is sex. In America, though hardly as yet in this country, anybody who knows much about Communism is suspect, and it is thought that the handling of the Soviet Republic should be left wholly in the hands of those who know nothing about it. In England the same attitude prevails about sex. A man who knows much about sex is a "nasty" man and is liable to have had his moral susceptibilities blunted through familiarity with unsavoury matters. Almost all boys, especially in the first years of adolescence, are very much interested in sexual matters, and their interest is whetted by the necessary secrecy. But many of them, when they reach middle-age and become respected citizens enjoying a certain position in the community, succeed in completely forgetting what they were like when they were boys and in imagining (sincerely, one must suppose) that, if obscene publications are kept out of the way of boys, their minds will be entirely filled with higher thoughts. Those who do not succeed in passing this Act of Oblivion over their memories, are thought not quite nice unless they keep silence. There is thus a sort of social reign of terror by which the view is promoted that good behaviour in sexual matters can only be maintained by means of ignorance.

It is remarkable how many people, when they are compelled to notice the existence of sex, forget everything that they have learnt in other spheres. It is now generally recognised that in America during prohibition there was much more drunkenness than before or since. Exactly the same thing applies to obscenity. The fact that it is forbidden makes it attractive and whets appetites that otherwise would soon be glutted.

The most objectionable part of the prohibition of what Magistrates consider obscene is that it interferes with the serious study of matters that have great social importance and with the dissemination of knowledge that ought to be widespread. Take, for example, the prohibition in this country of *The Well of Loneliness*. This book was a serious and dignified treatment of a problem which is of great personal importance to a section of the population and which is wholly ignored by the sort of people who are reputed to be "respectable." It is intolerable that bigots should be able to place upon the statute-book laws which accept it as an axiom that there are important matters as to which ignorance is positively desirable and knowledge is to be prevented if possible. It is true that we in England do not suffer as much in this respect as people do in some other countries. In Spain, for example, no novel dealing with adultery can be published. I do not know whether the ban extends to the *Iliad*. In France, which is commonly thought to be liberal in these respects, birth-control propaganda is illegal. In England the view prevails that, although venereal disease may be *cured*, it should not be *prevented* except by a virtuous life. The belief that ignorance in sexual matters is desirable does a very great

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deal of definite harm; but, in addition to the definite harm, there is diffusion of timidity and obscurantism which is unavoidable whenever any sort of knowledge is thought bad.

THERE is another argument against censorship which is that, however liberally obscenity may be defined, it will be found to condemn many of the greatest works of literature and art. Shakespeare, if he lived now, would have to emasculate his work very considerably. What modern publisher would tolerate some of the remarks of King Lear in Act IV, Scene 6? I dare not quote them, but the censor has not yet made it impossible for the reader to look them up. There are passages in the Bible to which I dare not give even a reference. Many of the recognised great pictures and statues of the world are obscene within the meaning of the act, and if you were to send photographs of them through the post, any philistine post official would have a right to destroy them. He would, in fact, have a right to destroy the originals, but fortunately they are not sent through the post.

It will perhaps be admitted that some of these consequences are rather absurd, but it may be said that the only possible remedy lies not in changing the law but in the gradual liberalising of Magistrates. This, it must be admitted, is a very distant hope. The trouble with any legal attempt to deal with the matter is the difficulty of defining obscenity in literature. In the film industry, the matter is easier: a kiss must not extend over more than a certain specified number of yards; a lady's clothing must begin below the neck at a certain proportion of her total height. Such rules are nice and definite, but it is difficult to invent anything equally precise for the control of poets and novelists. I do not see any way of amending the law which will prevent it from doing harm both artistically and as regards the dissemination of useful knowledge. For my part, if I had my way, I should abolish all legislation on the subject. Perhaps for the first year or two after such abolition there would be a flood of "feelthy" pictures, but if there was no ban on them, people would soon grow tired of them —except for a few with an exceptionally strong bent in this direction. At present a taste for pornography is almost universal among boys, but I think it is created by secrecy and tabu. If they were taught about sex in school, they would soon find it as dull as Cæsar's Commentaries.

However, I cannot hope that so extreme a measure as the total repeal of the laws against obscenity could possibly be carried. We must therefore ask ourselves whether there is any way in which the law could be rendered less pernicious.

THERE are some possible changes which might do much to mitigate the evils we have been considering. The first of these should be that, in any prosecution for obscenity, the author and publisher should have a right to be made parties. At present, if a timid bookseller is prosecuted, he may try to get the case settled with the least possible fuss, and may thus inflict damage upon author and publisher which, if they had been parties to the defence, they might have been able to avert. The second amendment that I should suggest is that all obscenity cases should come before Judges and not before Magistrates. The third rather important amendment would be to state in the act that defendants should have a right to call expert witnesses to prove that the work in question had literary merit or a laudable purpose, and that it should be the duty of the judge to give due weight to such testimony. As regards the law about obscene matter sent through the post, the Post Office should not have the right to destroy matter deemed by it to be obscene until after a legal decision condemning the matter in question. I knew a lady from the rural South of the United States who wrote an autobiography which I read in typescript. It was a serious work telling of undesirable conditions which ought to be known. The work was accepted by a Paris publisher who sent the proofs to her in England. She never received the proofs, but instead had a visit from Scotland Yard officials threatening her with prosecution for obscenity on the sole ground that she had related facts which the police thought ought to be kept dark. A number of her friends intervened and saved

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her from prosecution, but the book was not published and she had to leave England. Cases of this sort reveal the possibility of an intolerable police tyranny.

I do not know whether such mitigations of the law as I have been suggesting would have any chance of reaching the statute-book. They would, of course, be opposed by those who consider themselves the guardians of morality, for such men seem to be persuaded that no one but themselves would be virtuous except through ignorance. It is this belief which is at the root of the evil. In the time of Galileo it was advanced as a reason against the telescope, since that instrument brought knowledge that the pundits considered pernicious. The objection to knowledge has not the force that it once had, but those who uphold the objection are still fighting a rearguard action. I shall be told that it is absurd to suggest that knowledge about sex is seriously interfered with by the present state of the law, and people will point to such books as the Kinsey reports to refute my contention. But the Kinsey reports are extensive and erudite, and Mr. Kinsey, with consummate art, has succeeded in making his subject seem dull. It is no doubt these facts which have caused his work to be tolerated. But it is not only a few learned specialists who ought to have some knowledge about sex, for sex plays a large part in the life of everybody, and ignorance is a cause of much unnecessary suffering to a great many people—for example, to all those schoolboys who have been told by their masters that masturbation leads to insanity. It is not by ignorance, and still less by downright falsehood, that any virtue worthy of the name can be produced.

*R. S. Thomas*

# Lament for Prytherch

When I was young! When I was young!
Were you ever young, Prytherch; a rich farmer,
Cows in the byre, sheep in the pen,
A brown egg under each hen,
The barns oozing corn like honey?
You are old now. Time's geometry
Upon your face by which we tell
Your sum of years has with sharp care
Conspired and crossed your brow with grief.
Your heart, that is dry as a dead leaf
Undone by frost's cruel chemistry,
Clings in vain to the bare bough
Where once in April a bird sang.

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*Louis MacNeice*

# The Love of Women
## (Canto XI of Autumn Sequel)

THE golden guineas filter through the mist.
Farewell and hail: October waves her hand.
And (here beginneth the Ambiguist)

The art of falling is you cannot stand.
So fall, Pomona, with your breasts of apples
And fall, green ladies of the summer land,

Take to your moongrown rest in lofts and chapels
Before the long frost comes. A pencilled red
Cross on a broken wall that broken sunlight dapples

Will mark the window where you had gone to bed
And drawn the curtains. Legendary girls,
Sleep well and dream; it is your dreams that shed

Their aura on our loves; a string of pearls
Once worn and warmed by you preserves its glow
Though twined round real throats, through real curls,

In the realities of our long ago
Two or three decades back when what we knew
Lay subject still to what we did not know

And woman was El Dorado. The mere view
Of each untravelled ocean still could knock
Our knees together and our wits askew,

Standing like Cortez on a high dry rock
And fumbling for a name. The names emerge
And the young venturer, dizzy with the shock

And blinded by blue miles of glare and surge
Knows that he has been all but here before,
Here at this point of prospect, here at this void and verge.

But why Pacific? Mother or maid or whore,
This is that western sea where ships go down.
Think twice, Leander, trembling at the door,

Before you throw it wide and swamp the town.
What of it if you swam the Hellespont?
It is in Hero's love you are doomed to drown.

The names emerge. Whatever it is we want,
We christen lust to turn it into love;
Our church may be an arbour and our font

A flagon, still the bright myth floats above
And in the moment that the word is made
Woman, itself descends, a word, a dove,

While our dumb blood flowers in a cannonade
Of pentecostal voices. But not all
Names breathe out equal magic; some names fade

And some turn black and blacken our day and call
Our skeletons out of the cupboard. Byron invented
Haidee but did not marry her. A wall



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# *ENCOUNTER*

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Of wailing lies at the back of many a tented
Temple of Love; where men repent their folly
And the next wink repent that they repented,

While high among the bottle-glass Pretty Polly
Repeats "I told you so," repeats that this
Is no fit age for lovelorn melancholy

But for brass tacks and cold analysis,
Repeats "I told you so, I told you so, I am Pretty
Polly who knows that one peck makes a kiss."

But what does one lost handkerchief make? The pity
Of it, Poll Parrot, the pity! The old song
Hums on the telephone wires all round the city

As the wronged lover does himself more wrong
Waking in Circe's room, where marmosets
Lurk in the curtains and a slobbering throng

Of hairy or scaly creatures gambols and upsets
The creams and trays and siphons of last night,
Then swarms up Circe's bed, being her pets,

And as the young man shrinks away, the white
Body beside him vanishes and leaves
The bed to him and the beasts, while the bitter bright

Day creeps under the door and under the eaves
Outside the sparrows yield to a louder bird:
"I told you so, I told you so," it grieves,

"I told you so" it cackles, as the blurred
Mirror comes clear and shows a different room
And shows to Circe's bedmate what occurred

Really between them there. This is one gloom
Too gloomy, too well known, and hers one name
Whose magic blackens to one gathering doom

That has its day for most men. To reclaim
The day before is impossible, and yet
Worse magic still can cause us greater shame

In other names we gladly would forget:
Jocasta, Medusa, Medea. The man who meets
Whom can too seldom guess whom he has met

Until it is too late. The best-lit streets,
The happiest rooms, can hide them; and it is our
Own innocence drags them between the sheets

And makes their evil potent. A dark tower
Shadows each house they live in but it is we
Who helped them build it, as the poisoned flower

Medea wore between her breasts was free
Of poison until Jason placed it there
To kill her children and his. The lovesick sea

Turns black and claims its wrecks and London's air
Reeks of Thebes or Colchis, while London brides
Unveil and show the serpents in their hair.

This is that greater doom which bodes and bides
Its time till it burst the clock. This is the point
In the crooked and narrow path where romantic love collides

With brute and practical hate; where a witch's oils anoint
Our hands with numbness and our eyes with pain.
The strings, my lady, are false. Each minute is out of joint.

There is something rotten there, down Lovers' Lane
Where we had chosen to walk; those other, more Roman, roads
Drawn with a ruler dead against the grain

Of the live country, ruled by colder codes,
Seemed even more broken down; most ambition,
Most service of God or man, had seemed the modes

Of some forgotten music, futile mission.
So off we went. Went arm in arm. With what?
And to what end? It might have been perdition,

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Sometimes it was. Yet hells, however cold or hot,
Are not in fact for ever. At other times
Dawdling down that same lane we found a happier lot

Between wild hedges where the dogrose climbs
With Chloe or Nicolette, whose magic was white and pink
And no false note could spoil the varied chimes

We heard with them at midnight, when to think
Meant to feel and to feel meant to be
And being meant pure joy and no weak link

Impaired the daisy chain which a not impossible She
Had tied our hands and hers with. We did not call
On God or Time to free us; nor did we want a free

Hand, nor would we imagine a world at all
Outside our present chains. Nor did we know
That heavens, however green in leaf or gold in fall,

Are not for ever, and yet can be heavens even so.

*Anthony Thwaite*

# Delilah to Samson

Have I unravelled and cut back your hair
And flecked the shears with blood I could not share,
Stripped down your body to my own desire?

You tore the pillow when you raised your head,
Leaving a tuft of hair; stood up and said,
"Only by lust will you be comforted."

Yet you were wrong. Wrist lashed to sweating wrist,
You trudged away, a feeble eunuch ghost
Of him who once among my arms lay lost.

I saw you robbed, rejoiced to see you bound.
They were my hands which gave you corn to grind,
My eyes' sour juices made your own eyes blind.

But neither lust nor pain can take away
Your body from my eyes and limbs, nor may
A ransom smother your estranging cry.

Now as you bow beneath the stony air
I take you back: O look at me, see where
Your traitor claims you, hair by stolen hair.

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*Daniel J. Boorstin*

# Democracy and its Discontents: IV. The U.S.A.

UNLIKE most modern nations which only gradually acquired their sense of identity, we Americans started in the early 19th century with an aggressive assertion of our absolute distinctness from all the world. We bragged of being Americans without being able to say just what we meant; anyone who reads Emerson and Whitman cannot fail to sense both the insistence and the vagueness. The two formal elements in that sense of identity were: (a) a belief in our "differentness" from all the world; and (b) a belief in our physical separateness from all the world. Together they comprise the belief in American uniqueness.

Since about 1900 we have begun to discover that in many unsuspected ways we might be like the world and might be involved with the world. This declining sense of American uniqueness is the great trauma of the American mind in the last half-century. It has stirred our dissatisfaction with ourselves by shattering our traditional self-image. It has deprived us of our orientation towards the world. It has made us wonder who we really are. It is as if the Athenians had suddenly begun to doubt whether they were unlike the Spartans, or the Romans to suspect that they were really barbarians at heart.

All this has made us discontented, both with ourselves for not remaining happily the way we had always been, and with the world for assimilating us in it. It has also made us feel guilty. Democratic institutions everywhere provide people with novel opportunities for self-reproach by shifting the responsibility for misfortunes from the people's rulers to themselves. We Americans told ourselves for many generations that we inhabited an earthly paradise. If things don't go well in paradise—in "God's Country"—the inhabitants themselves certainly must be at fault.

The facts which contradicted both our differentness and our insulation from the world seem in retrospect to be the main events of recent American history. The disappearance of the frontier, which Frederick Jackson Turner noted in 1893, only gradually received general recognition. The decline of immigration from Europe and the stability of the American population as a whole were legislated into reality by 1921. The Great Depression of 1929 fractured our myth of immunity to serious economic diseases. Meanwhile, of course, our involvement in the First World War, when we for the first time sent a large expeditionary force overseas and became thoroughly entangled in European diplomacy, had destroyed our political insularity. The European War Debts once and for all enmeshed us in the business of Europe: who can believe that he lives in a different world from that of his debtor? The New Deal borrowed heavily from European concepts of government. The lesson of the Second World War could have been more emphatic only if the continental United States had actually been attacked. Now the Atom Bomb threatens to blast the remnant of our uniqueness.

These facts were the Fall of the American Adam. The American gradually discovered that he was no longer living in the Garden of



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Eden. How had it all happened? What was he to do about it? Should he try to recapture his Innocence, or should he try to atone for his Fall? These are the deep questions which have come to disturb the American mind and conscience.

AMERICAN man had been, in John Henry's phrase, "the natchal man." He had been in many ways doctrinally naked; but he had not noticed it. Nor was he apologetic or ashamed until he tasted the sins and weaknesses of all mankind. Then—that is to say in the early 20th century—he began frantically to seek a doctrine to cover his nakedness. It was thus the loss of our feeling of the "givenness" of our values that led us to a serious and general search for an "American Philosophy."

Europeans have naturally been inclined to classify American opinion into "isolationist" or "interventionist." But the basic categories stem, not from our attitude towards Europe but from our attitudes towards ourselves and towards the puzzle of our own identity. Generally speaking, there have been three kinds of articulate individuals.

First, there are the "Singulists," those who deny the fact of our lost uniqueness. For them, the United States remains singular among all the nations of the world. Their irritability, their bad temper, and their belligerency all betray an inward suspicion that perhaps there is some substance to the sneaking doubt that America isn't as singular as she used to be. What they say is neither novel nor subtle; to the unsuspecting ear it recalls Washington's Farewell Address, Jefferson's First Inaugural, and the Monroe Doctrine. But by their rhetoric, the vagueness of their arguments, and their heavy reliance on slogan and sentiment, the Singulists betray their belief that American uniqueness can be perpetuated by the mere act of affirming it. They have adopted the Emil Coué fad of the 1920's and tell themselves, "Every day in every way we are getting to be more and more the way we've always been."

Who are these Singulists? They are all the groups and individuals who believe in the surviving innocence of the original American character. Among organisations they are the American Legion, the Daughters of the American Revolution, and a host of patriotic groups with large memberships. Among individuals they include the publisher of the *Chicago Tribune*, Col. Robert R. McCormick, and such columnists as George Sokolsky and Westbrook Pegler. While superficially they might seem complacent, actually they are profoundly discontented with America, and with the drift of recent history. Like those who have thought that Soviet Russia and Communist China could be wished out of existence by simply refusing to "recognise" them, the Singulists try to wish away the most disturbing facts of 20th century American history by refusing to "recognise" them.

Perhaps the surest earmark of this point of view is an insistence on "100 per cent Americanism." It is the familiar overcompensation whose symptom is the superlative. The response of Hitlerite Germany to the weakness of their post-war position was that they were the strongest nation in the world. So the response of the Singulists to the suspicion that the United States may have lost some of her old uniqueness is to insist that we are "more unique" than ever before. From this point of view (contrary to European notions) recent "isolationism" is not essentially an expression of provincialism, materialism, or meanness of spirit. It is rather the frenetic response of people who have become accustomed to attribute everything good in their life to the uniqueness of their situation, and who feel that uniqueness in peril. This spirit, first expressed in the 1920's and 1930's in the form of articulate and self-conscious "isolationism," now is expressed also in anti-Communism; which is currently the most obvious way of insisting on American distinctness from a world seen as either controlled or about to be controlled by Communism.

The Singulists reaffirm American uniqueness by insisting that we are no less separate geographically and militarily than we ever were. We must make the Western Hemisphere a fortress against all the world, they argue. In diplomacy, it means that we can still "go it alone." They believe that we can keep separate from the world by certain acts of American

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policy, e.g. by keeping our money and our soldiers at home. Senator Bricker's proposed constitutional amendment would supposedly perpetuate our insulation (and hence our virtue) by preventing the President from entangling us in the undergrowth of world diplomacy. The most intelligent and most honourable statements of the Singulist position in American foreign policy have been those of Senator William E. Borah in the 1920's and of the late Senator Robert Taft in the 1930's and 40's. Generally speaking, the Singulists are now against participation in the United Nations, and oppose European Aid programmes.

They also continue to insist on the essential difference between our "Way of Life" in government and economics and the ways of life of all people elsewhere. Thus, Singulists like the late Senator Taft and Senator Dirksen have denied that the changing circumstances of American life and of world history in the last two generations have changed very much the appropriateness of old ways of dealing with domestic problems. They overlook the connection between the peculiar circumstances of the 19th century and our freedom from labour organisation and from governmental interference. To them the totality of American uniqueness in that age seems a unit of inseparable elements all of which can and ought to be perpetuated.

The Singulists have been harassed by paradoxes. They love a vigorous young America, but they are tempted to keep her so by paralysis. Since empiricism, dynamism, pluralism, and restlessness have accounted for many of the institutions that have made America great, the most un-American thing we can do is to try to keep America exactly as it has always been. The Singulists fail to see this.

Take, for example, their attitude to immigration. For nearly a century after the founding of the nation the Federal government had not exercised its powers to restrict immigration. In 1882, Congress began to restrict Oriental immigration; in 1917 it initiated a series of acts restricting all immigration. These acts aimed to maintain the "purity" of the American population; but in one way after another they violated the spirit of the American tradition. The literacy test for immigrants finally adopted over President Wilson's veto in 1917 and the growing number of other tests —culminating in the McCarran Act of 1952— have tried to ensure that all immigrants are antiseptic, lacking in dangerous diseases and dangerous ideas. These are the furthest possible departure from our traditional policy which Emma Lazarus inscribed under the Statue of Liberty. By 1940 the Singulists, for whom Congressman Martin Dies spoke in his *Trojan Horse in America*, could see only such facts as that 90 per cent of the members of the American Communist Party were foreign-born. They repeated with alarm what had been the boast of Americans for decades, that "this is the only country in the world that will admit aliens to any considerable degree."

Or take civil liberties. The view of the Singulists (with certain honourable exceptions) is that the pristine America can be preserved only by prohibiting heterodoxy. Their novel view of our ancient liberties is expressed in the aphorism of a former governor of California who declared, "Freedom of speech is such a precious privilege, we must be careful to whom we give it." They have demanded loyalty-oaths and have sought a dogma of Americanism for a country whose dogma has been anti-dogmatism.

SECONDLY, there are the Universalists. Like the Singulists, the Universalists tend towards an extreme. They are discontented with us because we have not yet become one with mankind. Their point of view is well expressed in the shrill title of Stringfellow Barr's recent pamphlet, "Let's Join the Human Race." They respond to our loss of uniqueness with enthusiasm.

Generally, the Universalists are more "respectable" intellectually. The Singulists lean towards provincialism and at their worst are Know-Nothings, friendly towards xenophobia and chauvinism. The Universalists are cosmopolitans, at their worst leaning towards vague humanitarianism, megalomania, and romantic optimism. If the Singulists sometimes are anti-intellectual, the Universalists often are hyper-intellectual. The Singulists validate their



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position by "horse-sense" and the common experience of all Americans; the Universalists support their arguments by metaphysics, by Plato and Aristotle, by Great Books in foreign languages and from distant places. While the Singulists criticise us for not talking exclusively to ourselves, the Universalists criticise us for not talking to everybody else all the time. For the Singulist most problems of public policy could be settled by a conversation (preferably in the Middle West) between two ordinary Americans over a Coca-Cola; for the Universalist our problems would be better settled in a salon.

While the eyes of the Singulists are fixed on The Good Old Days, those of the Universalists look towards the Millennium. Neither focuses on history. One suffers from myopia, the other from far-sightedness; a clear view of the middle distance is not for them.

The Universalist position is most clearly expressed in foreign policy. At the extreme they demand immediate World Government. They have published a journal, *Common Cause*, and have actually issued a draft constitution for planetary federalism. The more moderate Universalists approved Clarence Streit's *Union Now*, and are now uncritically enthusiastic for the United Nations. Organisations like the Foreign Policy Association support them. Their intellectual lineage goes back to Wilson's aspiration "to make the world safe for democracy," to the movements of the 1920's and 1930's towards Peace and Disarmament.

Only a few extremists demand world government tomorrow, but more than a few Americans now accept the belief in "One World," which Wendell L. Wilkie, Republican candidate for President in the election of 1940, expressed in his widely read book of that title. "There are no distant points in the world any longer," he wrote in 1943, ". . . The myriad millions of human beings of the Far East are as close to us as Los Angeles is to New York by the fastest trains. I cannot escape the conviction that in the future what concerns them must concern us, almost as much as the problems of the people of California concern the people of New York."

From the Universalists we hear panicky and hysterical attacks on nationalism. "We must aim," they say, "at a federal constitution of the world, a working world-wide legal order, if we hope to prevent an atomic World War." Between the simple alternatives of World Government and World Catastrophe, there is no room for inconvenient realities like history. Nationalism becomes a dirty word. This point of view, elaborated in Emery Reves' *Anatomy of Peace* (1945), was endorsed in a letter signed by a remarkably varied group of Americans including Senators Fulbright, Pepper, and Elbert D. Thomas, ex-Justice Owen D. Roberts, an Episcopal Bishop, a prominent Jesuit, the publisher Mr. Gardner Cowles, Albert Einstein, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Christopher Morley, Carl Van Doren, Mark Van Doren, a well-known labour leader, and others. "The modern Bastille is the nation-state," cries Mr. Reves, "no matter whether the jailers are conservative, liberal, or socialist. The symbol of our enslavement must be destroyed if we ever want to be free again. The great revolution for the liberation of man has to be fought all over again." This position is especially attractive because it is so "revolutionary" that it requires no immediate action.

Generally speaking, the Universalists take for granted that our entrance into the world community implies our domestic assimilation to the politics of Europe. To trace the growth of these tendencies we would have to go back at least as far as President Wilson, whose "New Freedom" required means of governmental regulation more familiar in Europe than in America, and whose own conception of the presidency was very close to that of a European prime minister. Under the New Deal these tendencies were accelerated. If, like Europe, we could suffer from disastrous depression, then maybe we should try some of the European expedients. And in the United States one began to hear phrases borrowed from the political lexicon of Europe: Socialism, United Front, Government Control, Unemployment Insurance, Social Security, etc. Perhaps the empirical and untheoretical spirit of American politics had been a sign of "immaturity." Perhaps our political parties, like those of France, ought to "stand for something."

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Perhaps our labour unions, traditionally characterised by short-term objectives and lack of ideology, ought now to "mature" through developing an ideology and participating actively in elections. (The Political Action Committee of the C.I.O. promoted this point of view.) Now for the first time in American history the intellectual and the academic had a position in government comparable to that of their fellow-intellectuals in Europe. Wasn't this a good thing? It was hard for professors sitting comfortably near the throne to doubt that it was. Communism was, of course, an extreme form of Universalism; and the Communists had some success in persuading people to forget the uniqueness of American life in favour of the world panaceas of Marx and Lenin.

The Universalists began to discover that most of the traditional American virtues were in fact vices: our empiricism was an ignorance of philosophy, our vocationalism was philistinism, our wealth was materialism, and our widespread literacy was nothing but vulgarity. As early as the 1920's Irving Babbitt and his New Humanists attacked our material well-being as itself a vice, apologised for Henry Ford and Thomas A. Edison, and endorsed *Punch's* aphorism that the United States was not a country but a picnic. Later, in the 1930's and 1940's, Mortimer Adler and Robert Maynard Hutchins denied the fact of universal American literacy; they demanded that the subject-matter of American education be redefined in a thoroughly cosmopolitan (or at least Western European) manner. They came more and more to think of educating Americans as training them to converse with the cultivated men of Europe about European classics. Their target, of course, was John Dewey who had sought to relate education to experience, and thereby to make the variety and the challenge of America even more important than books. The followers of this school sought structure, dogma, and unity. In order to think, Americans would have to learn to speak the universal language of the World's One-Hundred-and-Two Great Ideas. American thought, to be wise, would have to cease to be characteristically American.

Instead of being pleased with American welfare as the reward of skill, virtue, or good luck, they wrote of it shamefacedly as if it were a mark of sin, dishonesty, or prodigality. Did it not separate us from the fraternity of men? "The United States," Stringfellow Barr observed, "is a rich suburb, surrounded by slums." Shame on us for enjoying wealth in the midst of so much poverty! For being so healthy while others are so diseased! For being so well-fed while others go hungry! Some of them called for a "World Development Authority" to spread the wealth of the world in a satisfactorily uniform layer. A well-meaning American, inspired by charity or by moderate schemes for improving the lot of men in particular places, was made to feel like a society matron in a mink coat taking a Christmas turkey to the deserving poor.

In both Singulists and Universalists we find depressive pessimism and manic optimism. The Singulists cry woe to the USA. We will lose our democratic way of life, our prosperity and all our virtues if we do not return at once to our original purity! The Universalists cry woe to the world. It is, they say, "ten minutes to midnight"! If today we don't make ourselves one with the world, catastrophe will be on us tomorrow. Both groups are romantically optimistic, although on different scales: one imagines return to a virginal old New World; the other imagines the approach of a millennial, perpetually peaceful, new Old world.

The most notable common quality, not only of these extremists but of all who are deeply shaken by the loss of American uniqueness, is a flight into dogma. The Singulists, from the nature of their position and of their following, have found less need to elaborate their intellectual foundations. They are satisfied by patriotic slogans, for they suspect that "philosophy" itself is a European import. Even the philosophers of conservatism in America get pretty rough treatment at their hands. On the whole, therefore, the quest for doctrine is more notable among Universalists than among Singulists. Some have found it in religion, in a facile criticism of prevailing American religious attitudes. Others have found it in economics. The conservative philosophers

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must be included among the Universalists. Such sophisticated defenders of free enterprise as Henry Simon, Professor Milton Friedman and Professor Friedrich Hayek, whose *Road to Serfdom* has been widely read, argue from a basically Universalist position. America, they say, needs free enterprise, not because it is the indigenous "American Way," but because recent European history shows that it ought to be the way for men everywhere. Russell Kirk's conservatism, as embodied in his book, *The Conservative Mind*, while less realistic, is also Universalist in urging that the evils of American life are to be remedied, not by returning to the way *we* ever were, but rather by reaching for what an aristocratic Europe used to be. Another group, represented by Arthur Schlesinger Jr. and W. W. Crosskey, reaches back into the American past—to the Age of Jackson or the Framing of the Constitution—to validate what proves to be a New Deal Philosophy. The "New Conservatism" of Peter Viereck starts with the common problems of men everywhere, with how much we can learn from Metternich, and with a warning that in the United States we have not recognised our kinship with all men. Perhaps the most extreme of the dogmatic offerings these days is H. Paul Williams' *What Americans Believe and How they Worship* (1952), which urges that "Governmental agencies must teach the democratic ideal *as religion*." From all sides we are exhorted to leap into explicitness.

The American Singulists and Universalists are, if anything, too well known in Europe (and especially in England). Too few Europeans are aware of the importance of a third and growing point of view in the United States. The exponents of this point of view I call "Pluralists." They are aware that we are and have always been only one among many nations; and they respect differences. Their attitude is neither chauvinistic nor optimistic but surgical. They view the loss of American uniqueness as a neutral fact, calling for neither indignation nor enthusiasm. And this is precisely why many Americans have found their point of view irritating. Nobody likes to be told to "keep calm." Moreover, when the Pluralists tell us that, they deny us our heroic role and even the more moderate satisfaction of living in some great "Age of Transition."

THE view of the Pluralists is basically historical. They see history as a continuum. They do not expect that men or nations are ever likely to change much; and certainly not suddenly. They are not alarmed by recent history, for they are not obsessed by the uniqueness of the American past, and they remind us that we have never been quite as unique as we have supposed.

They urge self-analysis. It is not surprising, they explain, that we should feel sensitive and even a little guilty about our innocence. Unlike the countries of Europe, we have never been conquered or occupied by a foreign enemy, nor as a nation suffered the humiliation of "reconstruction." If we realise that we have been a poor little rich boy without the advantage of a rough-and-tumble youth, will this not itself help us understand ourselves and what others think of us? The Pluralists remind us that if we are to understand the common ways of mankind we must make up in imagination what we have missed in experience.

They show us how we have mistaken the fortunate characteristics of life on our own continent for universal characteristics of life on this planet. Reinhold Niebuhr, in his *Irony of American History* (1952), explains to us how the facts of our past have led us to believe in our own innocence as well as the innocence of the world. Professor C. Vann Woodward in his brilliant *Irony of Southern History* gives still subtler relevance to Niebuhr's insight. He urges us to exploit the variant histories of different sections of our country: for example, the Southern States during and after the Civil War shared common European experiences. These Pluralists see our hope, not in denying the past nor in affirming the future, but in understanding ourselves, accepting both the unique and the universal in our character. In *The Lonely Crowd*, Reuel Denny, Nathan Glazer, and David Riesman develop this point of view. "America," Professor Woodward observes, "has had cynical disparagement of

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her ideals from foreign, unfriendly, or hostile critics. But she desperately needs criticism from historians of her own who can penetrate the legend without destroying the ideal, who can dispel the illusion of pretended virtue without denying the genuine virtues."

This has required a reinterpretation of our diplomatic past. Walter Lippmann attempted this in his *U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic* (1943) and has been developing a Pluralist interpretation ever since. Perhaps the most important of such efforts has been George F. Kennan's *American Diplomacy 1900–1950*. Mr. Kennan, former director of the Policy Planning staff of our State Department and ex-Ambassador to the USSR, recognises the uniqueness of the American experience. He shows how our special circumstances have induced us to take certain attitudes towards ourselves and our foreign policy; and finally insists on the irrelevance and perils of many of those ideals and techniques in our new situation. Our traditionally "legalistic-moralistic" approach to international problems, he warns, is dangerous and fraught with illusions—illusions nourished by our peculiar history. "The idea of the subordination of a large number of states to an international juridical régime, limiting their possibilities for aggression and injury to other states, implies that these are all states like our own, reasonably content with their international borders and status." He reminds us how much we have lived by these illusions and shows how tolerant of us providence has been.

The Pluralists oppose the simplistic interpretations which we inherit from the days of the Nye Committee, and from Walter Millis' accounts of war as the product of warmongering. The revisionist view of the causes of the First World War, developed in the late 1920's by Sidney B. Fay, has prepared us to wonder whether we have really been as innocent as we suspected. "Power politics," they explain, is not a European superstition but is one of the basic facts of life. Perhaps the most influential and effective spokesman of this point of view has been Professor Hans Morgenthau, who urges on us the ideal of "peace through accommodation." His *Politics Among Nations* is now more widely used in American colleges and universities than all competing textbooks put together. The growing influence of this Pluralist point of view is suggested by the fact that Alf M. Landon, Republican candidate for President in 1936, could address the Kiwanis Club of Topeka, Kansas, the other day and urge them to keep an "open mind" on the possible admission of Red China to the United Nations.

In domestic politics the Pluralists are both less uniform and less dogmatic than either the Singulists or the Universalists. They start neither with a rigid demand to preserve a particular set of economic arrangements, nor with any predilection for the methods of European domestic politics. They are not alarmed by new expedients, nor do they automatically prefer them. They simply warn us against being obsessed either by our uniqueness or by the perils to it. The great enemy of nations, they say, is illusion. Satisfied by moderate objectives, they unashamedly plead for defence of the national interest.

A handy illustration of the variant attitudes is found in the current debate over academic freedom. The Singulists are perfectly willing to suppress academic freedom in the futile effort thereby to "Keep America Free." The Universalists, equally uncomprehending of the role of the intellectual in American life, sing funeral dirges over academic freedom, and compare us adversely to the "really liberal" peoples of Europe. But the Pluralists, neither complacent nor alarmed, see *facts* as the antidote to what David Riesman accurately describes as "a current mood of *a priori* despair." And they warn that to spread the myth of the destruction of freedom here may give substance to the fear. Such problems, Professor Riesman urges, are "not to be dealt with by such general terms as 'loss of faith' or 'growth of reaction.' . . . The future of America is as bewilderingly open as the present is opaque." The Pluralist position is increasingly expressed by dominant groups in both the Democratic and the Republican parties, which are willing to incorporate many novel responsibilities of government, like many other novel expedients, into American life.

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In the United States today there is no widespread discontent with democracy; we still believe its promises. But we are discontented with ourselves and worried over our ability to fulfil those promises. Especially because we know that America has offered a peculiar opportunity for fulfilment. In other ways, too, we pay the price for having bragged so loudly of our identity before we had filled it with a specific content. We are tempted into negative and shifting definitions: to assume that we are simply what Europe is not. When Europe was aristocratic, we were simply anti-aristocratic; now that part of Europe is Communist, we are simply anti-Communist. But what are we, in and for ourselves?

If America had been smaller or less varied our problem might now be simpler and the remedies for our discontent easier. But when our identity was unquestioned and our uniqueness seemed absolute, all the forces of climate, geography, and economics confirmed our illusions. America was a world. We therefore came to misconceive, not only our own nature, but even the nature of the real world outside. When we finally emerged into the world, we expected the world to be like the womb. Some of our deepest and most unnecessary disappointments have come from this naïve expectation.

If it is hard for us to live with the fact that the world is not simply a larger America, we should find some solace in the providential irony that defeats every idea once it becomes universal. If the world should ever become democratic, perhaps none of it could remain so. Who would then be the critics of democracy? For whom could we be an example? Although this danger is not immediate, Americans seem to be preparing themselves against the prospect that what Jefferson called the "Empire for Liberty" should be bounded only by the earth. Our children, already equipped with supersonic space-ships, are getting ready to make Mars safe for democracy.

# The Mother

You went, and all my days
With fragrance filled—
Lost in infinity,
My essence and my child.

Slowly upon my knees
I stumble on.
My knees are always cold
Now you are gone.

Too wide my gaze: I see
Nothing to love or hate.
How could you go so soon? I blush
To be so late.

*Rainer Maria Rilke*
(translated from the French of Rilke by Iris Origo)

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*Lucian Freud*

# Some Thoughts on Painting

MY OBJECT in painting pictures is to try and move the senses by giving an intensification of reality. Whether this can be achieved depends on how intensely the painter understands and feels for the person or object of his choice. Because of this, painting is the only art in which the intuitive qualities of the artist may be more valuable to him than actual knowledge or intelligence.

The painter makes real to others his innermost feelings about all that he cares for. A secret becomes known to everyone who views the picture through the intensity with which it is felt. The painter must give a completely free rein to any feelings or sensations he may have and reject nothing to which he is naturally drawn. It is just this self-indulgence which acts for him as the discipline through which he discards what is inessential to him and so crystallises his tastes. A painter's tastes must grow out of what so obsesses him in life that he never has to ask himself what it is suitable for him to do in art. Only through a complete understanding of his tastes can he free himself of any tendency to look at things with an eye to the way he can make them fit in with a ready-made conception. Unless this understanding is constantly alive, he will begin to see life simply as material for his particular line in art. He will look at something, and ask himself: "Can I make a picture by *me* out of this?" And so his work degenerates through no longer being the vehicle of his sensation. One might say that he has come to crystallise his art instead of his tastes, thereby insulating it from the emotion that could make it alive for others.

The painter's obsession with his subject is all that he needs to drive him to work. People are driven towards making works of art, not by familiarity with the process by which this is done, but by a necessity to communicate their feelings about the object of their choice with such intensity that these feelings become infectious. Yet the painter needs to put himself at a certain emotional distance from the subject in order to allow it to speak. He may smother it if he lets his passion for it overwhelm him while he is in the act of painting.

Painters who deny themselves the representation of life and limit their language to purely abstract forms, are depriving themselves of the possibility of provoking more than an æsthetic emotion.

Painters who use life itself as their subject-matter, working with the object in front of them, or constantly in mind, do so in order to translate life into art almost literally, as it were. The subject must be kept under closest observation: if this is done, day and night, the subject—he, she, or it—will eventually reveal the *all* without which selection itself is not possible; they will reveal it, through some and every facet of their lives or lack of life, through movements and attitudes, through every variation from one moment to another. It is this very knowledge of life which can give art complete independence from life, an independence that is necessary because the picture in order to move us must never merely *remind* us of life, but must acquire a life of its own, precisely in order to *reflect* life. I say that one needs a complete knowledge of life in order to make the picture independent



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from life, because, when a painter has a distant adoration of nature, an awe of it, which stops him from examining it, he can only copy nature superficially, because he does not dare to change it.

A painter must think of everything he sees as being there entirely for his own use and pleasure. The artist who tries to serve nature is only an executive artist. And, since the model he so faithfully copies is not going to be hung up next to the picture, since the picture is going to be there on its own, it is of no interest whether it is an accurate copy of the model. Whether it will convince or not, depends entirely on what it is in itself, what is *there* to be seen. The model should only serve the very private function for the painter of providing the starting point for his excitement. The picture is *all* he feels about it, *all* he thinks worth preserving of it, *all* he invests it with. If all the qualities which a painter took from the model for his picture were really taken, no person could be painted twice.

The aura given out by a person or object is as much a part of them as their flesh. The effect that they make in space is as bound up with them as might be their colour or smell. The effect in space of two different human individuals can be as different as the effect of a candle and an electric light bulb. Therefore the painter must be as concerned with the air surrounding his subject as with that subject itself. It is through observation and perception of atmosphere that he can register the feeling that he wishes his painting to give out.

A moment of complete happiness never occurs in the creation of a work of art. The promise of it is felt in the act of creation but disappears towards the completion of the work. For it is then that the painter realises that it is only a picture he is painting. Until then he had almost dared to hope that the picture might spring to life. Were it not for this, the perfect painting might be painted, on the completion of which the painter could retire. It is this great insufficiency that drives him on. Thus the process of creation becomes necessary to the painter perhaps more than is the picture. The process in fact is habit-forming.

**FOUR PAINTINGS BY LUCIAN FREUD** ➡

I. *Christian Bérard* (Collection of Boris Cochno)

II. *Girl Reading*

III. *John Minton*

IV. *Francis Bacon* (Tate Gallery)

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*Jack Curtis*

# A Day's Work

YESTERDAY afternoon I walked across the field and down the trail to the beach, a long crescent of fine tan sand anchored at each end by black sea crags. Like most beaches along the central California coast this one is a good hundred feet below the level of the land so that it is not a slope one descends but is in fact a cliff, nearly sheer, although not bare for it grows masses of wormwood, poison oak, lupin, wild blackberry, and a variety of succulents. Down the face of this cliff the trail angles towards almost the centre of the beach. It is the only reasonable way of getting there, although there are animal paths that teeter along the cliff through the brush.

My purpose for going there was to comb the beach for any worthwhile driftage which might have been driven in by our last big storm. It was also a fine sunny day, a day so beautiful in warmth and blueness and so fresh from the rains, that one would need no purpose at all for getting out into it. And so with joy I walked across the damp earth to the trail head and stood there for a moment looking down on the breakers' full lines swinging in and skidding into reverse on the sand. The sea was a fine deep blue.

At the bottom of the trail I turned left on the shingle that separates the sand from the cliff wall. The last storm had been heavy enough to throw breakers up on this line of cobbles, and it would be here that flotsam would hang back from the receding wave. I poked through tangles of kelp and disordered stacks of driftwood looking for nothing in particular but finding much of curiosity in the trash. The driftwood was made up of about half lumber and half branches, and among the white and sanded boards were ribs and strakes of lost boats, a piece of decking perhaps or a finely served stanchion. There was even the full keel of a fishing boat, oily black and rusted from its nails and bolts. Other than kelp and driftwood, there were the sea shells, an occasional icy tear of a jelly fish left stranded, and racoon tracks in the sand, too. I tried to notice the rocks and cobbles of the shingle for there is some jade, rhodonite, and jaspar scattered along this shore.

The sharp cocoa-colour of a piece of driftwood caught my eye first. The piece hefted very heavy, and its texture was finely sanded. It was naturally formed to contours indicative of a nude, but not precisely, so that there was a beautiful balance established between this polished piece of hard wood and the imagination of the beholder. Its base was about four inches through and it stood slightly more than a foot high. The proportions and the contours being exceedingly pleasant, I stowed it in my pack. I am not a fanatic in the matter of collecting driftwood or rocks, rather the opposite if anything, being somehow prejudiced against the current idea that all unnatural pieces of wood or rock are beautiful.

I walked on up the shingle, taking my time, remarked the illusion of outer breakers cresting above me, picked up a couple of clams which had been thrown from the sand, tossed them back and after a while came to a point of rock which met the sea. Caught in a crevice of this rock was a knife.

It was hand-made. Its edge was ragged from abuse but it was not scored past saving and the



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steel in it felt to be very fine. The blade was about eight inches long and was Bowie shaped. After examining it, I turned around and went back the way I had come, though this time I stayed well out on the beach where it is easier walking and where perhaps some lone small thing might have anchored as the last wave withdrew. There was nothing unusual to be seen except for an extra large number of stones which had been dragged from the shingle by the high seas.

When I came abreast of the trail I went back again to the shingle and worked up the north end of the beach. I had gone this way about fifty feet when I heard the rattle of falling rock and looking up quickly, saw a deer moving from an obscured crevice in the cliff face. It so happened that I had been hunting for a good big buck for a couple of weeks and had not, as the local expression goes, "seen hair or horn." Thus my first direct look at the deer as it moved away from me was at its head and I was already groaning at seeing the barren feminine poll with its clamshell ears, when I noticed the doe's left hind leg flap up over her back. I groaned again but not this time for myself but for that terribly fine creature there, made ever so splendidly in structure and form, from its grotesque ears to its jointless shoulder-blades, from its large eyes, to its flagging tail and chisel feet, this terribly fine creature which trotted away from me on three legs while the other flapped around and high and low like a pennant in a tricky wind. For such a pain of pity the sea sighs.

She slowly, though nimbly (and how astounding to see her travel at all on three legs) trotted ahead of me until she came to a shallow cave washed in the cliff where she turned out of my sight. Not wishing to excite her by getting closer, I walked in an arc out on the sand to a point where I could see her plainly again. She was lying down now with her front legs tucked under her and the crushed leg underneath somewhere.

I then had to decide, and beachcombers as well as starving writers always decide very deliberately or not at all. I could just leave her as she was and perhaps the next tide would take her out. But the sea was getting calmer by the hour and the tides would be progressively lower for the next six days. She would certainly starve on the beach and her chances of finding, let alone ascending the trail to the field were a hundred to one, and even if she reached the field she could only grow weaker in suffering until the coyotes or a bobcat accepted her. I had the notion for a second that perhaps it was only a deformed leg, one which she had already adapted but after another second's remembering how that one perfectly formed leg flung around as limber as chain, I knew I could not escape mercy.

I still held the knife I'd found, and for a moment considered going to her and cutting her throat, but I am experienced enough in the matter of cutting deer throats to know that one prudently waits until those two front hooves are still.

I had to hurry back for my rifle.

My wife was at the door. I went on past her and got the rifle and a sharp knife. "There's a crippled deer down on the beach," I said.

To my dismay she made a face mimicking my young son when he is given something especially tasty and said, "Yum, yum."

"She's an old starved doe, all beat up," I mumbled from the steps.

Although I had already known that I had to, and had already decided to as I had run across the field, I didn't want to think about butchering her, let alone eating her. Yet, we were to the point where fresh meat couldn't be traded for emotion, especially because my wife was pregnant.

I left my pack at the door and got a couple of gunny sacks from the garage and drove my old car to the fence gate. A huge padlock and chain secured the gate but the chain was tethered to the gate-post with only a piece of rusty thin wire, easily undone.

There was a chance that I'd get stuck in the field but I couldn't risk dragging or carrying her in broad daylight in full view of any game warden who might drive by. I could explain the guiltless circumstances to any reasonable game warden, but there being always the chance of running into an unreasonable one, I chose to play it safe as possible.

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The earth was solid enough. I left the car, trotted down the trail to the beach and stopped for a minute to get my breath. I lighted a cigarette and made myself finish it. Then I walked across the sand to where I could see the doe lying as she had been, head up, looking directly, squarely at me. Ears up, front legs tucked under, although not tensed to leap. I moved in a little closer. She did not tremble or flinch as I sighted her in. When an imaginary line drawn between her two big eyes, eyes that never flinched and eyes that for the life of me would tell me nothing, eyes most passive and gentle, neither saying damn you to hell, nor please hurry it up, when the imaginary cross-line rested on top of the bead perfectly centred in the peep, I squeezed the trigger.

The bang of the Mauser was even more terrific than normal because of the nearness of cliff. I watched her head through the sight for a moment. The hole was about a quarter of an inch below where I'd meant it to be, but well placed nevertheless. Her head didn't drop as I had wanted, rather she laid it down of her own will whether she had any brains left to will anything or not, and she was a long time in becoming still, so long in fact, I considered another shot, but it was obviously needless. I set the rifle aside and holding her muzzle with my left hand, stabbed to the vein in her throat and let the sand blot up her blood.

As she bled I looked her over, but not looking at the shattered leg even then. She was a doe. I had hoped she might be a yearling buck. Fleas scurried through the short white hair of her belly. Her bag was already swelling. Her coat was a little shaggy.

Their feet, their whole build is too perfect. They get so they think they can dance on cliff sides, and sometimes they even do, but sometimes they don't. They are fooled by their own perfection. This is the third one I've found that's fallen from where it danced, but the other two were dead long before I found them. I have seen them do impossible acrobatics, wild leaps and cartwheels, and come through with perfect poise but now I have seen three who were betrayed by feet too tooled, by bones and muscles too fine. This is the second pregnant and broken doe I've had to handle. The first one was hit by a car on the highway and just dead when I found her.

Well, she had at least one ham and the saddle, and the liver for sure. My wife's face, anticipation; now there was no help for it. After dragging her by her good leg along the beach and up the trail, I wrapped her wounds with the gunny sacks, loaded her into the trunk and drove back to the highway. When the car was at the garage door, I began to breathe a little more normally. The penalty for poaching is heavy, for me it would be disastrous.

I had to look at the leg before hanging her. It was shattered from hock to hip as if it had been rolled up. I cut a slit behind each tendon and from the broken one black blood broke out.

The knife made a neat cut down her belly into the brisket and I worked the viscera out carefully so as not to spill her dung nor break any membranes, especially that of the fœtus which I'd known all along would make my throat lock. I forgot and suddenly remembered to take the heart and liver. Then I skinned her, a skill, not an art. Her left shoulder was full of blood from the bruise of her fall and her left side was also bruised and two ribs were broken.

By the time I was through it was dark enough so that the flies would not bother the carcass. I buried the offal in the field behind the house.

My wife sensed that I didn't want to talk. She had a cup of coffee cut with bourbon ready for me.

It was quiet in the room while I thought over wretched things (white breakers, blue skies, green fields, brown mountains, black blood), and impossible things (how to live without taking), and the irony (is it irony?) that the pregnant doe should nourish my pregnant wife, and thinking, knowing for sure, that if I told her that the doe was with young, that I had just ripped out the kicking fœtus and buried it alive, she wouldn't be able to look at that choice liver, let alone eat it. I sat and drank the spiked coffee and thought over wretched things.

After a while I got the piece of cocoa-coloured driftwood out of my pack and it was pleasing to her.

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*Stephen W. Pollak and Vilem Bernard*

# The Restive Mind

SHORTLY before his suicide in the spring of 1952 the Czech lyrical poet Konstantin Biebl wrote in a letter to a friend: ". . . I remembered all the slights Maiakovski had to suffer. . . . No one can have an idea what heart-breaking work it is to write a political poem. . . ."

No one indeed—before Czeslaw Milosz published his moving indictment, *The Captive Mind*, and only very few people in the West—could have understood the nature of the predicament of the creative spirit in eastern Europe. Or else—and this was often worse than nothing—the *political* concepts of freedom and slavery were unthinkingly applied to the vast and complex realm of the mind. The result is that today it is generally believed in the West that, where the Communist Party is struggling to subjugate the mind of man, the only alternatives are escape into silence or capitulation to those in power. This dangerous over-simplification—which too often finds expression in crude Western propaganda destined for the intellectuals of Eastern Europe—fails to allow for the thousand and one subtleties of the human mind cornered by its pursuers and oppressors. Czeslaw Milosz has called these subterfuges of the harrassed intellectual "Ketman," quoting Gobineau's explanation that the people of the Mussulman East believe that "He who is in possession of the truth must not expose his person . . . to the blindness, the folly, the perversity of those whom it has pleased God to place and maintain in error."

The outcome of the application of this maxim to the conditions of the omniscient and Communist state is a kind of artistic and literary "double-think" and "double-speak" which it is almost impossible for the West European intellectual to unravel, not only because he is a West European but because he assumes that his values and those of his East European counterpart are necessarily identical. For him, a Polish or Czech writer or poet who still has his writings published has "caved in," has allowed his mind to be fettered in exchange for the pleasures of the fleshpots.

The choice is not, thank God, as clear-cut as that. That is, not for those who have mastered the art of "Ketman," the science of *mimikri*, of protective colouring, which allows the creative mind to exist and operate on two levels—one above ground, the other beneath the surface. But many have tried—and failed. They have fallen by the wayside, escaped into silence or death, the victims of their inability to meet the rigid requirements of "Ketman."

In May 1948, the great Czech poet František Halas said to his friend Michel-Léon Hirsch of the Paris newspaper, *Le Figaro*, who came to see him in Prague: "*Je reviens de la Russie. . . . Ce pays-là est terrible: jamais un poète ne pourrait vivre en Union Soviétique!*" Less than two years later Halas was dead, of drink and a broken heart. In Russia he and the other fine Czech poet, Vitězslav Nezval had visited, with considerable difficulty, the outstanding Soviet poet Boris Pasternak, then in disgrace, a victim of the Zhdanov drive in favour of "Socialist Realism." On returning to Prague, Halas, a member of the Czech Communist Party



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almost from its inception and one of its leading protagonists in literature, withdrew into a silence only occasionally broken by half-hearted attempts to make his peace with a movement which he had served all his adult life yet which had not scrupled to break Pasternak and others whom he loved and admired on the wheel of orthodoxy. But Halas was not adept at "Ketman." He died leaving behind a political testament, dictated to two friends in the last weeks of his life and taken out of Czechoslovakia by Professor Angelo Mario Ripellino of Bologna University, which is a scathing indictment of Communist methods of bending and breaking the souls of men.

VITĚSZLAV NEZVAL also returned from Moscow haunted by the picture of Pasternak reduced to silence. But he sought escape neither in silence nor in illness and death, like his friends Halas and Biebl: instead he won the Czech State Prize of Poetry and the Stalin Peace Prize and is today recognised as the greatest living Czech poet. But—seekers for simple, black-and-white formulæ, note!—he did so not by becoming a hack writer or the sycophantic poet-laureate of an oppressive régime, but by practising his own brand of "Ketman." Nezval is a natural poet who sees, hears, smells, and feels in terms of poetry, a man to whom the flow and murmur of the Vltava *is* a poem before he puts pencil to paper; to whom Prague, with its hundreds of towers, churches, and palaces, its embankments and flowering gardens behind century-old walls is itself the essence of poetry; to whom the bells of St. Nicholas Church rhyme with the darker chimes of the Tyn Church; whose poetry owes nothing to anything so transient and ephemeral as a government or a régime.

Listen to the Nezval who sings of Prague's "Night of Acacias":

Two or three days of love has life: then this withered tree hangs full of a thousand bees and blossoms,
Like the one night in June when the acacias bloom and die.
The river is wearing a chaplet of lights and is fragrant with embalmed bathers,
The streets are suddenly wide and sparkling like beauty shops.
From beyond the river over hanging bridges, with a rosary of lights,
Invisible gardens are on the march, colliding with walkers;
They're off to their rendezvous with the parks and the alleys of the central squares and main streets.
Benumbed I do not recognise the old streets of the New City
Whose plain and graceless walls are today majestic as palace courts.

O night of acacias, of fountains and of that treacherous pianissimo, stay,
Make me for ever yearn for love and for Prague;
O night at the end of June, short-lived as passionate love, as sensual delight.

O night of acacias, do not pass before I have crossed all the bridges of Prague
In my search for no one, not a friend, not a woman, not even myself.

O night with summer in your wake, I long to breathe unendingly your ebon hair;
Your diamonds have bewitched me, I want to look for them in the waters, poor fisherman that I am.

Oh if at least I could say au revoir to you,
O night in June,
If I were never to see you again,
Let me dissolve in your embrace, my evil fate, my love.

And now listen to the Nezval who won the State Prize of Poetry at the time of the Stockholm Peace Appeal:

I sing the song of peace. They are only few
But we are a hundred million.
Chime, clocks of Prague!
Peace is neither loot nor gift.

I sing the song of peace. Let us fight
For peace and the future of the world,
For a blossom that a woman weaves into her braid,
For the people, for songs, for machines.

I sing the song of peace. Surge ahead
Facing the foe eye to eye.
Show him how vain is his plan
To destroy our world through war!

I sing the song of peace!

How simple it would be if one could only call the first work great lyrical poetry and the

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second "propaganda" or, at best, *de l'art engagé*! Yet this is not true. Reading through Nezval's poetry, from "Night of Acacias" (1937) to the "Song of Peace" (1950), one sees how many shades there are between black and white, between "true" poetry and "applied" poetry, in the case of those minds in Eastern Europe which do not suffer captivity gladly! For, although in the second work he renders unto Cæsar that which is Cæsar's ("We are a hundred million" and "Surge ahead, facing the foe . . ."), nevertheless "The blossom that a woman weaves into her braid" is a daring sally into "emotional subjectivism" and even "Chime, clock towers of Prague!" is far removed from the drum-pounding, jaw-clenching stanzas of hackneyed Socialist Realism. Here is genuine poetical praise of peace, and the Stockholm Peace Appeal simply provided the impetus which released Nezval's poetical powers, just as a walk through Prague in June releases those same powers in praise of beauty, life, and love. At the same time it is the poet's way of practising "Ketman," the sleight-of-hand that enables him to express deeply felt emotions, while in the same poem satisfying what the country's masters deem to be the requirements of the "cultural consumer" at a given moment.

IN order to appreciate how this intellectual "duplicity" has come to be accepted as the unnatural refuge of many a harassed mind in Czechoslovakia, it is necessary to understand that the great majority of her writers and creative artists have always sympathised with the general aims of the Communist Party, and long before 1948 at least belonged to that diffuse group called the "intellectual left." And yet, before the seizure of power of the Communists, the relationship of the creative intellectual towards the Party had always been marked by a strange ambiguity: while accepting the Party's programme and policy as holding out, politically and economically, the surest promise for a better world, they hardly ever allowed the Party—which they supported in preference to other parties—to encroach upon the realm that alone mattered to them: their creative life. This equivocal and platonic relationship with the world's most exacting lover could not, of course, survive the day when the Party assumed not only total power but also the role of supreme arbiter over all the activities of the mind. The always somewhat shadowy border-line between the public and private lives of Communists (and sympathisers) was wiped out overnight, and the Party which, when in opposition or in coalition, had reluctantly put up with the mental reservations of the intellectual, now exacted unreserved tribute.

Thus began the first period in Czechoslovakia of the Party's war of attrition against the minds of the creators—the period of unadulterated "Socialist Realism," the period of the "positive hero," of adulation of everything Soviet, the period in which *Tvorba*, the Party's theoretical journal, could say, solemnly: "We need to know what Stalin has to say on the peasant problem, if we want to write a good poem on life in our villages today, just as we must know Lenin's teachings on Imperialism if we want to write a story about Western Germany." "The typical hero under typical circumstances" became the watchword for poets, novelists, dramatists, painters, and sculptors. Gustav Bareš, editor of *Tvorba*, backed by Vaclav Kopecki, Minister of Culture, became the *supremus arbiter elegantiarum* in literature and the arts. Though no writer himself, let alone a literary critic, Bareš was an expert literary bloodhound adept at tracking down the least deviation from the Party Line. It was also a period of unashamed and nauseating literary sycophancy in which the sorriest hacks, never before printed outside club and village magazines, found themselves elevated to the status of *Hofdichter* and their creations given place of honour in the country's leading literary weekly, *Literarni Noviny*. Here is Jan Noha's tribute to the late President Gottwald:

As loyally as a workman's heart
Your heart will beat in all our breasts.
The beauty of Slovakia and Bohemia
Will flutter above your head, Comrade President,
And their peoples by whom you've always stood
Come unto you to lay their love at your feet.

It was a period of blatant dilettantism, for

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the simple reason that many gifted and established writers and poets remained too unconvincing, or at best lukewarm, in their praise of the "positive hero in typical circumstances." A new generation of writers had to be hurriedly produced from the ranks of manual workers, artisans, and even from the "converted" petite bourgeoisie to take over—at least while the real writers wrestled with their artistic consciences in purging the last traces of "decadence" from their works. At the same time, this officially sponsored dilettantism naturally made it far more difficult for writers of genuine talent, however loyal they might be politically, to adapt themselves to the new literary requirements. Thus, in spite of the hectic propaganda campaign for the application of "new production methods" to literary creation, few writers succeeded as well as Nezval in fulfilling what was demanded of them. Some thought it sufficient to "vulgarise" their style; others conceived the mistaken idea that the "proletarian poetry" of the 'twenties à la Maiakovski had swung into a new cycle and had to be taught that in post-1948 Czechoslovakia there was no room for a poetry that stormed against social wrongs and injustices; whilst yet others failed to embody in their verses some of the political slogans that had been proclaimed as being of "vital topicality." The Communist poet Školaudy was reminded in *Tvorba* that for all the "joy" in his poems he had omitted to mention "the enemy, the cannibal faces of dividend collectors counting corpses, the blood-dripping hands of the slayers of Korean children," and that, moreover, he "only superficially worked into his writings love for the Party and the feeling of a community of interests with the fighting people of Korea."

Two events brought this first period to a close: the Slansky trial and the suicide in November 1951, of the poet Konstantin Biebl. This tragic death seems to have brought home to the men in Prague's Castle that they were playing a dangerous game in trying to bulldoze the creative Czech artist—along slavishly copied Soviet lines—into conformity with the precepts of Socialist Realism. The official explanation of the death of the 53-year-old poet was that he had been driven to suicide by attacks from abroad (!) following a poem in which he had demanded the death penalty for General MacArthur. But this must have been too ludicrous even for the most faithful believers to swallow, for the true background of the tragedy was clearly revealed six months later, when *Literarni Noviny* wrote on May 24th, 1952:

". . . This complex, hard and often painful regeneration of our most gifted artists, a regeneration in which the artist has shed his old skin which had become too tight while the new one has not yet grown, has been exploited by a sectarian clique aiming to drive these artists into silence through disgust and thus out of public life. It exploited the period when the artist's inner being was torn and weakened by strenuous striving for a new expression and it persisted in wounding that inner being in its most sensitive spots. The remnants of outdated artistic thought were made a pretext by that clique to trip up these artists and to mar their joy in further creation—instead of tendering a helping hand in these men's efforts to rid themselves of what bound them to their creative past. . . . It was to such sniping from ambush that Konstantin Biebl too was subjected. It is as well to ponder the lesson of these sabotaging tactics on our literary front, for it has claimed for victim one of our greatest Socialist poets."

This was indeed plain speaking in a country which had become so accustomed to "double-speak" that every official pronouncement on literary (and other) matters became a subject of painstaking exegesis lest misinterpretation incur dire consequences. Within a few days of this radical "switch" of line, the Party daily, *Rudé Právo*, in a leading article came out with a violent condemnation of "sectarianism, vulgarisation of Socialist Realism, and underestimation of artistic mastery" in the country's literary and cultural life. And *Literarni Noviny* demanded "a comradely attitude towards those artistic workers who proved their loyalty to the Party as citizens already before the war, although as artists they had formed groups propagating false, formalistic and decadent programmes." They did not deserve, the paper concluded, to be treated "with contempt and contumely."

Since the ruling party could not admit to

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past mistakes and thus lay itself open to the charge of fallibility, a whipping-boy had to be found for the disastrous effects of the drive for intellectual *Gleichschaltung* in Czechoslovakia. The scapegoat was on hand in the shape of Rudolf Slansky and his "gang." And though it was impossible to maintain that Slansky and his followers had themselves corrupted the literary and artistic life of the country—as they were accused of doing in the case of the country's political and economic structure—it was said that their agents had carried the germ of "Slanskyism" into art and letters by applying the pernicious creed of sectarianism, intolerance, "vulgarisation of the Party line," and witch-hunting to the arts. Having pinned the blame for the new nadir of Czech literature on one who, through his impending crucifixion, had been given his last Party assignment of taking with him into his grave all the sins and errors committed by the Party and its leaders since 1948, the authorities proceeded to close down *Tvorba* and to dismiss Gustav Bareš.

By revoking the crudest forms of Party control, the long anti-Slansky campaign prepared the ground for the post-Stalin period, which saw a mild form of "liberalisation" in the arts. Jan Drda, in an address in June 1953 to the Writers Union of which he is chairman, said that the Union, "under the influence of the former [Slansky] Secretariat [of the Party] had often rudely interfered in a leftist manner with the publication and caused the suppression of important works of our literature." This attitude, he explained, had created "naïve pride in us which made us look down on non-Party writers and on those creative workers who were painfully struggling for their further artistic development."

The deep sigh of relief that must have been heaved by Czech writers and poets who had been performing the precarious tight-rope set of literary "Ketman" is almost audible in the preface which V. Nezval wrote for his republished translation of Calderon's *El Escandido y la Tapada* which had originally appeared in 1930:

> Even if *El Escandido* is not a topical play today, even if the Spain of Calderon is not the Spain of today, even if this Spain is the mirage of a darkly scented night of passion, even if its heroes fight for love alone—I trust that the play's poetic humanism, as I conceive it, is not too remote from the sentiments of real man to give to our people today that sense of bewitching magical charm that is like the charm of fireworks on Venetian nights after a day's hard toil. And if this play gives to our people nothing more than this joy and enchantment of its spiritual atmosphere, they will have been amply rewarded!

There is precious little Socialist Realism left in this outburst of a man who clearly exults in the newly permitted use of such "subjective-emotionalist" words as "enchantment," "bewitching," "mirage," and "darkly scented night of passion"—which in, say, 1950 would have been as unthinkable as a eulogy of Trotsky, Hitler, or Eisenhower!

The campaign against the dead Halas and the invectives against "halasism" (read: lyricism) came to an abrupt end. Instead, his pre-war "Torso of Hope," a collection of delicate, rather melancholic, purely "subjective" poems, reappeared in print in July 1953. Jaroslav Seifert, an eminent lyrical poet who was rejected by *Tvorba* in 1950 and had been almost silent since then, was invited in *Literarni Noviny* by Miroslava Drozda, a critic of the "relaxation" period, to "join our ranks" and Stanislav Neuman's 1950 attack on Seifert was castigated in the same journal. Vladimir Neff, a pre-war novelist, son of a wealthy Prague family, whose choice of subjects had always been regarded by the Party as "bourgeois," was rescued from long oblivion and permitted to write the scenario for a new film. Even more unexpectedly, Jan Carek, outstanding pre-war "bucolic" poet and contributor to *Venkov*, the organ of the proscribed Agrarian Party, saw a collection of his pre-war poems republished.

It is hardly surprising that these repeated right-about-turns dictated to the luckless suppliers of Czechoslovakia's "cultural consumers" frequently result in a certain amount of confusion in the none-too-serried ranks of the "literary front." Thus the reviewer (in *Literarni Noviny* of November 19th, 1953) of a collection of poems by the young Communist poet, Vlastimil Školaudy, praises him for his healthy reaction against "that weeping and

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gnashing of teeth which debased the lyrical poet and reduced him to a germ carrier of the petit bourgeois 'crisis of man'!" But alas, poor Školaudy, the sting is in the tail, for: "... Yet at the same time he ... falls into the opposite error, that of drab naturalism. Pouring out the baby with the bath water he loses touch with poetic lyricism: he is mostly content to assemble and string together descriptive facts ... but his style has little emotional originality which could move or excite the reader."

Having seen samples of Školaudy's "drab naturalism," which the poor puzzled poet mistook for proletarian realism, one cannot but agree with this critic. Here is one:

> Sumptuous sausage
> Machine-sliced,
> Paper-bag,
> Tasty soybeans
> Which the grocer joins
> To the red brick of cheese—
> Speak on our hearth
> For the sweet blessings of peace.

Yet while Školaudy is criticised for lack of "emotional originality," the same reviewer, discussing Ivo Fleischmann's collection "Song of the Great Spring" in the same issue, writes:

> Fleischmann apparently believes (and so do others among our lyrical poets at the same stage of their development) that to create true poetry sentiment is all that is needed! But mere sentiment without a clear ideological basis, without an idea from which it can flow, is like an empty shell without a kernel: emotion without thought is a rudderless craft.

How confusing it all is! Whereas Školaudy is blamed for lagging behind the "new trend," Fleischmann seems to have ventured recklessly beyond it: more emotion—and less "realism" —is needed, but the amount has still to be weighed on a jeweller's scales.

One of the gifted young poets who seems to have struck the happy medium between the two extremes and who is using his newly won, if strictly relative, freedom to lash out—so far with impunity—at past methods of enslaving the creative mind in the name of socialism, is a disciple of Konstantin Biebl's, Milan Kundera. Here is a poem of his, published last year, devoted to his dead teacher:

> You, Konstantin, never believed
> That a Communist is one who does not love men:
> Those sombre priests
> Who immured themselves in Marxism as in a cold castle.
>
> Yet you knew of the keys
> In Communism which unlock thousand-year-old cages
> You knew that from these cages
> Freed human souls will soar into undreamt-of regions.
>
> You, Konstantin, never doubted
> That the foes of life and of poetry are the same:
> Those who want to change Socialism into dreary deserts
> Always begin by rudely debasing its poetry!

The comparative relaxation in Communist guidance of literature and the arts does not mean, of course, that the Party has even begun to abdicate its aspiration to dominate the minds of man. Nor can it afford to do so, if it is not to resign itself at the same time to abandon domination over their bodies. The leash is lengthened but is not weakened. The questions "How?", "How much?", and "How far?" are ever present in the minds of rulers, writers, and critics. So far, the rigid intolerance that marked the worst excesses of the Stalin period has been suspended. But the greater the freedom granted, the stronger is the tendency to make sure that the creative artist and his restive mind do not abuse their new privileges. As long as Socialist Realism, in all its crude primitiveness, was the simple order of the day, it was easy enough to detect "deviation" and to nip it in the bud. Today, the Party's task is far more complex, being threefold: it has to ensure that the new opportunities are "joyfully" grasped; it has to ensure that the new limits of relative freedom are not exceeded; and finally it has to ensure that there is no backsliding into bourgeois heresies.

In view of the fact that the human mind cannot help soaring upward "into undreamt-of regions," it would seem that the Party has set itself an unenviable task.



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*Vernon Scannell*

# How to fill in a Crossword Puzzle

First adjust your spectacles and take your pen,
(A pencil will serve equally well) and pick the easiest clue:
Here you are: five letters down—"What is Man?"
Clown, Rogue, Beast, or even Saint would do.

Now let's try another going across. Here is one
Which seems more likely than the rest: "Lethal but Sweet,"
A six-letter word, the first of which is B
If Beast were right for man—the beast with two feet.

Think hard—"Lethal but Sweet." Assuming Beast is correct,
Breast might fit, the sweet but bladed breast
Of her you hugged, who bled you white and stabbed
To death your groping heart most treacherously.

If, as may well be, you have mistakenly put Beast
Adjustments are required unless you are going to let
This chequered puzzle stay unsolved. Try Rogue instead of Beast,
Then "Lethal but Sweet," could reasonably be Regret.

Of course the word Clown would fit the first clue you attempted
(Yes, I admit this puzzle is confusing)
Then your six-letter word going across might be
Coitus, Create, Cringe, or possibly Crying.

The other word, less likely I suppose, is Saint.
Here the thing "Lethal but Sweet" would begin with S.
Sinful it might be, Senses or simply Seduce.
The snag about these clues is the alternatives are endless.

Write in the words faintly because you may have to alter them,
And be warned. When the puzzle is solved, and like a satisfied lover
You lean back sighing and sleepy, then you will find
That the black squares hide the secrets you will never uncover.



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*W. H. Auden*

# Balaam and the Ass

## On the literary use of the Master-Servant Relationship

### I

*Friend, I do thee no wrong. Didst thou not agree with me for a penny?*
Matthew, XX

THE relation between Master and Servant is agnatic, not cognatic; that is to say, it is not given by nature or fate but comes into being through an act of conscious volition. Secondly, it is not erotic; an erotic relationship, e.g. between man and wife or parent and child, comes into being in order to satisfy needs which are, in part, given by nature; the needs which are satisfied by a master-servant relationship are purely social and historical. By this definition, a wet nurse is not a servant, a cook may be. Thirdly, it is contractual. A contractual relationship comes into being through the free decision of both parties, a double commitment. The liberty of decision need not be, and indeed very rarely is, equal on both sides, but the weaker party must possess *some* degree of sovereignty. Thus a slave is not a servant because he has no sovereignty whatsoever; he cannot even say, "I would rather starve than work for you." A contractual relationship not only involves double sovereignty, it is also asymmetric; what the master contributes, e.g. shelter, food, and wages, and what the servant contributes, e.g. looking after the master's clothes and house, are qualitatively different and there is no objective standard by which one can decide whether the one is or is not equivalent to the other. A contract, therefore, differs from a law. In law all sovereignty lies with the law or with those who impose it, and the individual has no sovereignty. Even in a democracy where sovereignty is said to reside in the people, it is as a member of the people that he has a share in that, not as an individual. Further, the relationship of all individuals to a law is symmetric; it commands or prohibits the same thing to all who come under it. Of any law one can ask the æsthetic question, "Is it enforceable?" and the ethical question, "Is it just?" An individual has the æsthetic right to break the law if he is powerful enough to do so with impunity, and it may be his ethical duty to break it if his conscience tells him that the law is unjust. Of a contract, on the other hand, one can only ask the historical question, "Did both parties pledge their word to it?" Its justice or its enforceability are secondary to the historical fact of mutual personal commitment. A contract can only be broken or changed by the mutual consent of both parties. It will be my ethical duty to insist on changing a contract when my conscience tells me it is unjust only if I am in the advantageous position;



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if I am in the weaker position I have a right to propose a change but no right to insist on one.

When the false oracle has informed Don Quixote that Dulcinea can only be disenchanted if Sancho Panza will receive several thousand lashes, the latter agrees to receive them on condition that he inflict them himself and in his own good time. One night Don Quixote becomes so impatient for the release of his love that he attempts to become the whipper, at which point Sancho Panza knocks his master down.

*Don Quixote: So you would rebel against your lord and master, would you, and dare to raise your hand against the one who feeds you.*

*Sancho: I neither make nor unmake a king, but am simply standing up for myself, for I am my own lord.*

Similarly, when Mr. Pickwick, on entering the Debtors Prison, attempts to dismiss Sam Weller because it would be unjust to the latter to expect him to accompany his master, Sam Weller refuses to accept dismissal and arranges to get sent to jail himself.

Lastly, the master-servant relationship is between real persons. Thus we do not call the employees of a factory or of a store servants because the factory and the store are corporate, i.e. fictitious, persons.

## II

*Who is there?*
*I.*
*Who is I?*
*Thou.*
*And that is the awakening*
*—the Thou and the I.*
Paul Valéry

MAN is a creature who is capable of entering into Thou-Thou relationships with God and with his neighbours because he has a Thou-Thou relationship to himself. There are other social animals who have signal codes, e.g. bees have signals for informing each other about the whereabouts and distance of flowers, but only man has a language by means of which he can disclose himself to his neighbour, which he could not do and could not want to do if he did not first possess the capacity and the need to disclose himself to himself. The communication of mere objective fact only requires monologue and for monologue a language is not necessary, only a code. But subjective communication demands dialogue and dialogue demands a real language.

A capacity for self-disclosure implies an equal capacity for self-concealment. Of an animal it is equally true to say that it is incapable of telling us what it *really* feels and that it is incapable of hiding its feelings. A man can do both. For the animal motto is that of the trolls in Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*—"To thyself be enough"—while the human motto is—"To thyself be true." Peer is perfectly willing, if it is convenient, to swear that the cow he sees is a beautiful young lady, but when the Troll-King suggests an operation which will take away from Peer the power of distinguishing between truth and falsehood so that, if he wishes that a cow were a beautiful girl, the cow immediately appears to him as such, Peer revolts.

To present artistically a human personality in its full depth, its inner dialectic, its self-disclosure and self-concealment through the medium of a single character is almost impossible. The convention of the soliloquy attempts to get round the difficulty but it suffers from the disadvantage of *being* a convention; it presents, that is, what is really a dialogue in the form of a monologue. When Hamlet soliloquises, we hear a single voice which is supposed to be addressed to himself but in fact is heard as addressed to us, the audience, and it is impossible not to suspect that he is not disclosing to himself what he conceals from others, but only disclosing to us what he thinks it is good we should know, and at the same time concealing from us what he does not choose to tell us.

A dialogue requires two voices, but, if it is the inner dialogue of human personality that is to be expressed artistically, the two characters employed to express it, and the relationship between them, must be of a special kind. The pair must in certain respects be similar, i.e. they must be of the same sex, and in other

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respects, physical and temperamental, polar opposites—identical twins will not do because they inevitably raise the question, "Which is the real one?"—and they must be inseparable, i.e. the relationship between them must be of a kind which is not affected by the passage of time or the fluctuations of mood and passion, and which makes it plausible that wherever one of them is, whatever he is doing, the other should be there too. There is only one relationship which satisfies all these conditions, that between master and personal servant. It might be objected at this point that the Ego-self relationship is given while the master-servant relationship, as defined above, is contractual. The objection would be valid if man, like all other finite things, had only the proto-history of coming into being and then merely sustaining that being. But man has a real history; having come into being, he has then through his choices to become what he is not yet, and this he cannot do unless he first chooses himself as he is now with all his finite limitations. To reach the "age of consent" means to arrive at the point where the "given" Ego-self relationship is changed into a contractual one. Suicide is a breach of contract.

## III

*Crichton: There must always be a master and servants in all civilised communities, for it is natural, and whatever is natural is right.*
*Lord Loamshire: It's very unnatural for me to stand here and allow you to talk such nonsense.*
*Crichton: Yes, my lord, it is. That is what I have been striving to point out to your lordship.*
J. M. Barrie, *The Admirable Crichton*

DEFINED abstractly, a master is one who gives orders and a servant is one who obeys orders. This characteristic makes the master-servant relationship peculiarly suitable as an expression of the inner life, so much of which is carried on in imperatives. If a large lady carelessly, but not intentionally, treads on my corn during a subway rush hour, what goes on in my mind can be expressed dramatically as follows:

*Self (in whom the physical sensation of pain has become the mental passion of anger):*
"Care for my anger! Do something about it!"
*Cognitive ego:* "You are angry because of the pain caused by this large lady who, carelessly but not intentionally, has trodden on your corn. If you decide to relieve your feelings, you can give her a sharp kick on the ankle without being noticed."
*Self:* "Kick her."
*Super-ego (to simplify matters, let us pretend that super-ego and conscience are identical, which they are not):*
"Unintentional wrongs must not be avenged. Ladies must not be kicked. Control your anger."
*Lady (noticing what she has done):*
"I beg your pardon! I hope I didn't hurt you."
*Self:* "Kick her!"
*Super-ego:* "Smile! Say 'Not at all, Madam.'"
*Volitional ego (to the appropriate voluntary muscles):*
*either* "Kick her!"
*or* "Smile! Say 'Not at all, Madam!'"

Of my "five characters,"* only one, my cognitive ego, really employs the indicative mood. Of the others, my self and my super-ego cannot, either of them, be a servant. Each is a master who is either obeyed or disobeyed. Neither can take orders. My body, on the other hand (or rather its "voluntary muscles"), can do nothing but what it is told; it can never be a master, nor even a servant, only a slave. While my volitional ego is always both, a servant in relation to either my self or my super-ego, and a master in relation to my body.

The "demands" of reason are not imperatives because, although it is possible not to listen to them and to forget them, as long as we listen and remember it is impossible to disobey them, and a true imperative always implies the possibility of either obeying or disobeying. In so far as we listen to reason, we are its slaves, not its servants.

* Needless to say, one must add here and throughout what follows: "Nevertheless, there are not five characters but one person."

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## IV

*I care for nobody, no, not I,*
*And nobody cares for me.*
*The Miller of Dee*

*But my five wits nor my five senses can*
*Dissuade one foolish heart from serving thee,*
*Who leaves unswayed the likeness of a man,*
*Thy proud heart's slave and vassal wretch to be.*
Shakespeare, Sonnet CXLI

BECAUSE of its double role the volitional ego has two wishes which, since the Fall, instead of being dialectically related, have become contradictory opposites. On the one hand it wishes to be free of all demands made upon it by the self or the conscience or the outer world. As Kierkegaard wrote:

*If I had a humble spirit in my service, who, when I asked for a glass of water, brought me the world's costliest wines blended in a chalice, I should dismiss him, in order to teach him that pleasure consists not in what I enjoy, but in having my own way.*

When Biron, the hero of *Love's Labour's Lost*, who has hitherto been free of passion, finds himself falling in love, he is annoyed.

*This senior-junior, giant-dwarf, Dan Cupid,*
*Sole emperator and great general*
*Of trotting paritors (O my little heart)*
*And I to be a corporal of his field*
*And wear his colours like a tumbler's hoop.*

On the other hand, the same ego wishes to be important, to find its existence meaningful, to have a *telos*, and this *telos* it can only find in something or someone outside itself. To have a *telos* is to have something to obey, to be the servant of. Thus all lovers instinctively use the master-servant metaphor.

*Miranda:*
*To be your fellow*
*You may deny me; but I'll be your servant,*
*Whether you will or no.*
*Ferdinand:*
*My Mistress, dearest,*
*And I thus humble ever.*
*Miranda:*
*My husband then?*
*Ferdinand:*
*Aye, with a heart as willing*
*As bondage e'er of freedom.*

And so, with calculation, speaks every seducer.

*Bertram:*
*I prithee do not strive against my vows.*
*I was compelled to her, but I love thee*
*By love's own sweet constraint, and will for ever*
*Do thee all rights of service.*
*Diana:*
*Ay, so you serve us*
*Till we serve you.*

To be loved, to be the *telos* of another, can contribute to the ego's sense of importance, provided that it feels that such giving of love is a free act on the part of the other, that the other is not a slave of his or her passion. In practice, unfortunately, if there is an erotic element present as distinct from *philia*, most people find it hard to believe that another's love for them is free and not a compulsion, unless they happen to reciprocate it.

Had man not fallen, his wish for freedom would be simply a wish not to find a *telos* in a false or inferior good, and his wish for a *telos*, a longing for the true good, and both wishes would be granted. In his fallen state, he oscillates between a wish for absolute autonomy, to be as God, and a wish for an idol who will take over the whole responsibility for his existence, to be an irresponsible slave. The consequence of indulging the first is a sense of loneliness and lack of meaning; the consequence of indulging the second, a masochistic insistence on being made to suffer. John falls in love with Anne who returns his love, is always faithful and anxious to please. Proud and self-satisfied, he thinks of *my Anne*, presently of *my wife*, and finally of *my well-being*. Anne as a real other has ceased to exist for him. He does not suffer in any way that he can put his finger on, nevertheless he begins to feel bored and lonely.

George falls in love with Alice who does not return his love, is unfaithful and treats him badly. To George she remains Alice, cruel but real. He suffers but he is not lonely or bored, for his suffering is the proof that another exists to cause it.

The futility of trying to combine both wishes into one, of trying, that is, to have a *telos*, but to

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find it within oneself not without, is expressed in the myth of Narcissus. Narcissus falls in love with his reflection; he wishes to become its servant, but instead his reflection insists upon being his slave.

## V

*Das verfluchte Hier*
(The accursed Here)
Goethe, *Faust*

GOETHE'S *Faust* is full of great poetry and wise sayings but it is not dramatically exciting; like a variety show, it gives us a succession of scenes interesting in themselves but without a real continuity; one could remove a scene or add a new one without causing any radical change in the play. Further, once the Marguerite episode is over, it is surprising how little Faust himself actually does; Mephisto creates a new situation and Faust tells us what he feels about it. I can well imagine that every actor would like to play Mephisto, who is always entertaining, but the actor who plays Faust has to put up with being ignored whenever Mephisto is on stage. Moreover, from a histrionic point of view, is there ever any reason why he should move instead of standing still and just delivering his lines? Is not any movement the actor may think up arbitrary?

These defects are not, of course, due to any lack of dramatic talent in Goethe but to the nature of the Faust myth itself, for the story of Faust is precisely the story of a man who refuses to be anyone and only wishes to become someone else. Once he has summoned Mephisto, the manifestation of possibility without actuality, there is nothing left for Faust to represent but the passive consciousness of possibilities. When the Spirit of Fire appears to Faust, it says:

> *Du gleichst dem Geist, den du begreifst,*
> *Nicht mir.*
> (You resemble the spirit you comprehend, not me)*

* All translations, which are merely literal, have been made by the editors.

and, in an ideal production, Faust and Mephisto should be played by identical twins.

Near the beginning of the play Faust describes his condition:

> *Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach in meiner Brust,*
> *Die eine will sich von der andern trennen;*
> *Die eine hält, in derber Liebeslust*
> *Sich an der Welt mit klammernden Organen;*
> *Die andre hebt gewaltsam sich vom Dust*
> *Zu den Gefilden hoher Ahnen.*
> (Two souls, alas, dwell in my breast,/one wishes to flee the other;/one with a Fierce lust/clings to earth with gripping limbs;/ the other rises powerfully from the dust/toward the high ancestral realms.)

This has nothing to do, though he may think it has, with the conflict between pleasure and goodness, the kingdom of *this* world and the kingdom of Heaven. Faust's *der Welt* is the immediate actual moment, the actual concrete world now, and his *hohen Ahnen* the same world seen by memory and imagination as possible, as what might have been once and may be yet. All value belongs to possibility, the actual here and now is valueless, or rather the value it has is the feeling of discontent it provokes. When Faust signs his contract with Mephisto, the latter says:

> *Ich will mich hier zu deinem Dienst verbinden*
> *Auf deinen Wirk nicht rasten und nicht ruhn;*
> *Wenn wir uns drüben wiederfinden*
> *So sollst du mir das Gleiche tun.*
> (I'll bind myself to your service here/neither shirk nor rest from your work;/then when we meet over there/you will do the same for me.)

to which Faust replies airily:

> *Das Drüben kann mich wenig kümmern*
> *Schlägst du erst diese Welt zu Trümmern,*
> *Die andre mag darnach entstehen.*
> (What is over there doesn't bother me/if you break this world to bits/another may arise in its place.)

because he does not believe that *das Drüben*, the exhaustion of all possibilities, can ever be reached as, indeed, in the play it never is. Faust escapes Mephisto's clutches because he is

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careful to define the contentment of his last moment in terms of anticipation:

*Im Vorgefühl vom solchen hohen Glück*
*Genies ich jezt den hochsten Augenblick.*
(In anticipation of such high bliss/I now enjoy my highest moment.)

But, though Faust is not damned, it would be nonsense to say that he is saved. The angels bearing him to Heaven describe him as being in the pupa stage, and to such a condition Judgement has no meaning.

Mephisto describes himself as:

*ein Teil des Teils, der Anfangs alles war,*
*Ein Teil der Finsternis, die sich das Licht gebar*
(a part of the part which in the beginning was all,/a part of the darkness which light brought forth)

as, that is to say, a manifestation of the rejection of all finiteness, the desire for existence without the limitation of essence. To the spirit that rejects any actuality, the ideal must be the *Abgrund*, the abyss of infinite potentiality, and all creation must be hateful to it. So Valéry's serpent cries out against God:

*Il se fit Celui qui dissipe*
*En conséquences son Principe,*
*En étoiles son Unité.*
(He made Himself into Him who dissipates/his principle into consequences,/his unity into stars.)

In the Prologue The Lord describes Mephisto as one:

*Die stets das Böse will und stets das Gute schaft,*
(who always wills evil and creates good.)

but it is hard to see what good or evil he does to Faust. Through his agency or his suggestion, Faust may do a good deal of harm to others, but Faust himself is completely unaffected by his acts. He possibly allows Mephisto to entertain him and is no more changed in character by these entertainments than we are by watching the play.

Faust may talk a great deal about the moral dangers of content and sloth, but the truth is that his discontent is not a discontent with himself but a terror of being bored. What Faust is totally lacking in is a sacramental sense,* a sense that the finite can be a sign for the infinite, that the secular can be sanctified; one cannot imagine him saying with George Herbert:

*A servant with this clause*
*Makes drudgery divine;*
*Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws*
*Makes that and the action fine.*

In this lack Faust is a typical modern figure. In earlier ages men have been tempted to think that the finite was not a sign for the holy but the holy itself, and fell therefore into idolatry and magic. The form which the Devil assumed in such periods, therefore, was always finite; he appeared as the manifestation of some specific temptation, as a beautiful woman, a bag of gold, etc. In our age there are no idols in the strict sense because we tire of one and take up another so quickly that the word cannot apply. Our real, because permanent, idolatry is an idolatry of novelty. And in such an age the Devil appears in the form of Mephisto, in the form, that is, of an actor. The point about an actor is that he has no name of his own, for his name is Legion. One might say that our age recognised its nature on the day that Henry Irving received a knighthood.

## VI

*Voglio far il gentiluomo*
*E non voglio più servir.*
Da Ponte, *Don Giovanni*
(I would be a gentleman and would no longer serve.)

*Dein Werk! O törichte Magd.*
Wagner, *Tristan and Isolde*
(Your work ! O silly maid.)

THE man who refuses to be the servant of any *telos* can only be directly represented, like the Miller of Dee, lyrically. He can sing his rapture of freedom and indifference, but

* If Faust holds any theological position, it is pantheist. The pantheist believes that the universe is numinous *as-a-whole*. But a sacramental sign is always some particular aspect of the finite, *this* thing, *this* act, not the finite-in-general, and it is valid for this person, this social group, this historical epoch, not for humanity-in-general. Pansacramentalism is self-contradictory.

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after that there is nothing for him to do but be quiet. In a drama he can only be represented indirectly, as a man with a *telos*, indeed a monomania, but of such a kind that it is clear that it is an arbitrary choice; nothing in his nature and circumstances imposes it on him or biases him towards it. Such is Don Giovanni. The *telos* he chooses is to seduce, to "know" every woman in the world. Leporello says of him:

> *Non si picca, se sia ricca*
> *Se sia brutta, se sia bella,*
> *Purchè porta la gonnella.*
> (It doesn't matter; if she's rich/if she's ugly; if she's pretty/so long as she wears a skirt.)

A sensual libertine, like the Duke in *Rigoletto*, cannot see a pretty girl, or a girl who is "his type" without trying to seduce her; but if a plain elderly woman like Donna Elvira passes by, he cries, "My God, what a dragon," and quickly looks away. That is sensuality, and pains should be taken in a production to make it clear why the Duke should have fallen into this particular idolisation of the finite rather than another. The Duke must appear to be the kind of man to whom all women will be attracted; he must be extremely good-looking, virile, rich, magnificent, a *grand seigneur*.

Don Giovanni's pleasure in seducing women is not sensual but arithmetical; his satisfaction lies in adding one more name to his list which is kept for him by Leporello. Everything possible, therefore, should be done to make him as inconspicuous and anonymous in appearance as an FBI agent. If he is made handsome, then his attraction for women is a bias in his choice, and if he is made ugly, then the repulsion he arouses in women is a challenge. He should look so neutral that the audience realises that, so far as any finite motive is concerned, he might just as well have chosen to collect stamps. The Duke does not need a servant because there is no contradiction involved in sensuality or indeed in any idolatry of the finite. The idol and the idolater between them can say all there is to say. The Duke is the master of his ladies and the slave of his sensuality. Any given form of idolatry of the finite is lacking in contradiction because such idolatry is itself finite. Whenever we find one idol we find others, we find polytheism. We do not have to be told so to know that there are times when the Duke is too tired or too hungry to look at a pretty girl. For Don Giovanni there are no such times, and it is only in conjunction with his servant, as Giovanni-Leporello, that he can be understood.

Don Giovanni is as inconspicuous as a shadow, resolute and fearless in action; Leporello is comically substantial like Falstaff, irresolute and cowardly. When, in his opening aria, Leporello sings the words quoted at the head of this section, the audience laughs because it is obvious that he is lacking in all the qualities of character that a master should have. He is no Figaro. But by the end of the opera, one begins to suspect that the joke is much funnier than one has first thought. Has it not, in fact, been Leporello all along who was really the master and Don Giovanni really his servant? It is Leporello who keeps the list and if he lost it or forgot to keep it up to date or walked off with it, Don Giovanni would have no *raison d'être*. It is significant that we never see Don Giovanni look at the list himself or show any pleasure in it; only Leporello does that; Don Giovanni merely reports the latest name to him. Perhaps it should have been Leporello who was carried down alive to hell by the Commendatore, leaving poor worn-out Giovanni to die in peace. Imagine a Leporello who, in real life, is a rabbitty-looking, celibate, timid, stupendously learned professor, with the finest collection in the world of, say, Trilobites, but in every aspect of life outside his field, completely incompetent. Brought up by a stern fundamentalist father (Il Commendatore) he went to college with the intention of training for the ministry, but there he read Darwin and lost his faith. Will not his day-dream version of his ideal self be someone very like Don Giovanni?

It is fortunate for our understanding of the myth of Tristan and Isolde that Wagner should have chosen to write an opera about it, for the physical demands made by Wagnerian opera defend us, quite accidentally, from an illusion which we are likely to fall into when reading

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the medieval legend; the two lovers, for whom nothing is of any value but each other, appear on the stage, not as the handsomest of princes and the most beautiful of princesses, not as Tamino and Pamina, but as a Wagnerian tenor and soprano in all their corseted bulk. When Tamino and Pamina fall mutually in love, we see that the instigating cause is the manly beauty of the one and the womanly beauty of the other. Beauty is a finite quality which time will take away; this does not matter in the case of Tamino and Pamina because we know that their romantic passion for each other has only to be temporary, a natural but not serious preliminary to the serious unromantic love of man and wife. But the infinite romantic passion of Tristan and Isolde, which has no past and no future outside itself, cannot be generated by a finite quality; it can only be generated by finiteness-in-itself against which it protests with an infinite passion of rejection. Like Don Giovanni, Tristan and Isolde are purely mythical figures in that we never meet them in historical existence; we meet promiscuous men like the Duke, but never a man who is absolutely indifferent to the physical qualities of the women he seduces; we meet romantically passionate engaged couples, but never a couple of whom we can say that their romantic passion will not and cannot change into married affection or decline into indifference. Just as we can say that Don Giovanni might have chosen to collect stamps instead of women, so we can say that Tristan and Isolde might have fallen in love with two other people; they are so indifferent to each other as persons with unique bodies and characters that they might just as well—and this is one significance of the love potion—have drawn each other's names out of a hat. A life-long romantic idolatry of a real person is possible and occurs in life provided that the romance is one-sided, that one party plays the Cruel Fair, e.g. Don José and Carmen. For any finite idolatry is, by definition, an asymmetric relation: my idol is that which I make responsible for my existence, in order that I may have no responsibility for myself; if it turns round and demands responsibility from me, it ceases to be an idol. Again, it is fortunate that the operatic medium makes it impossible for Wagner's Tristan and Isolde to consummate their love physically. Wagner may have intended, probably did intend, the love duet in the Second Act to stand for such a physical consummation, but what we actually see are two people singing of how much they desire each other, and consummation remains something that is always about to happen but never does, and this, whatever Wagner intended, is correct: their mutual idolatry is only possible because, while both assert their infinite willingness to give themselves to each other, in practice both play the Cruel Fair and withhold themselves. Were they to yield, they would know something about each other and their relation would change, into a one-sided idolatry, a mutual affection, or a mutual indifference. They do not yield because their passion is not for each other but for something they hope to obtain by means of each other —Nirvana, the primordial unity that made the mistake of begetting multiplicity, *der Finsternis die sich das Licht gebar.*

Just as Don Giovanni is inseparable from his servant Leporello, so Tristan and Isolde appear flanked by Brangaene and Kurvenal. It is Kurvenal's mocking references to Morold that make Isolde so angry that she decides to poison Tristan and herself, in consequence of which Tristan and she are brought together; otherwise he would have kept his distance till they landed. It is Brangaene who substitutes the love potion for the death potion so that Tristan and Isolde are committed to each other, not by their personal decisions, but by an extraneous factor for which they are not responsible. It is Brangaene who tells King Mark about the love potion so that he is willing to forgive the lovers and let them join each other, but tells him too late for his decision to be of any practical help. And it is Kurvenal's leaving of his master to greet Isolde that gives Tristan the opportunity to cause his death by tearing off his bandages. Kurvenal obeys his friend like a slave who has no mind of his own.

*Dem guten Marke*
*dienst ich ihm hold,*
*wie warst du ihm treuer als Gold!*
*Musst' ich verrathen*

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*den edlen Herrn,*
*wie betrogst du ihn da so gern.*
*Dir nicht eigen,*
*einzig mein.*
(Good Mark/you served him well/ how you were truer to him than gold !/when I had to betray/the noble gentleman,/how gladly you betrayed him then./Not yourself's own/only mine.)

Tristan tells him, but then points out that Kurvenal has one freedom which he, Tristan, can never have. He is not in love.

*Nur—was ich leide,*
*das—kannst du nicht leiden.*
(Only—what I suffer/that—you cannot suffer.)

As in the case of Don Giovanni and Leporello, one begins to wonder who are really master and mistress. Imagine a Kurvenal and a Brangaene who in real life are an average respectable lower middle-class couple (but with more children than is today usual), living in a dingy suburban house. He has a dingy white-collar job and has a hard time making both ends meet. She has no maid and is busy all day washing the diapers of the latest baby, mending the socks of older children, washing up, trying to keep the house decent, etc. She has lost any figure and looks she may once have had; he is going bald and acquiring a middle-aged spread. Their marriage, given their circumstances, is an average one; any romantic passion has long ago faded but, though they often get on each other's nerves, they don't passionately hate each other. A couple, that is, on whom the finite bears down with the fullest possible weight, and provides the fewest of its satisfactions. Now let them concoct their day-dream of the ideal love and the ideal world, and something very like the passion of Tristan and Isolde will appear, and a world in which children, jobs, and food do not exist. His boss and her husband will appear as King Mark, an old beau of hers (to him) and an old disreputable drinking crony of his (to her) as Morold, the scandalmongering neighbours next door as Melot. They cannot, however, keep the sense of reality out of their dream and make everything end happily. They are dreamers but they are sane dreamers, and sanity demands that Tristan and Isolde be doomed.

## VII

*The fool will stay*
*And let the wise man fly.*
*The knave turns fool who runs away,*
*The fool, no knave perdy.*
Shakespeare, *King Lear*

ACCORDING to Renaissance political theory, the King, as the earthly representative of Divine Justice, is above the law which he imposes on his subjects. For his subjects the law is a universal, but the King who makes the law is an individual who cannot be subject to it, since the creator is superior to his creation —a poet, for instance, cannot be subordinate to his poem. In general, the Middle Ages had thought differently; they held that not even the King could violate Natural Law. In English history, the transition from one view to the other is marked by Henry the Eighth's execution of Sir Thomas More who, as Lord Chancellor and a priest, was the voice of Natural Law and the keeper of the King's Conscience. Both periods believed that, in some sense, the King was a divine representative, so that the political question "Is the King obliged to obey his law?" is really the theological question "Does God have to obey His own laws?" The answer given seems to me to depend upon what doctrine of God is held, Trinitarian or Unitarian. If the former, then the Middle Ages were right, for it implies that obedience is a meaningful term when applied to God—the co-equal Son obeys the Father. If the latter, then the Renaissance was right, unless the sacramental theory of kingship is abandoned, in which case, of course, the problem does not arise.* An absolute monarch is a representative of the deist God. The Renaissance King, then, is an individual, and the only individual, the

* Or does it? In recent years we have seen the emergence, and not only in professedly totalitarian countries, of something very like a doctrine of the Divine Right of States, though the adjective would be indignantly denied by most of its exponents.

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superman, who is above the law, not subject to the universal. If he should do wrong, who can tell him so? Only an individual who, like himself, is not subject to the universal because he is as below the universal as the King is above it. The fool is such an individual because, being deficient in reason, subhuman, he has no contact with its demands. The fool is "simple," i.e. he is not a madman. A madman is someone who was once a normal sane man but, under the stress of emotion, has lost his reason. A fool is born a fool, and was never anything else; he is, as we say, "wanting," and, whereas a madman is presumed to feel emotions like normal men, indeed to feel them more strongly than the normal man, the fool is presumed to be without emotions. If, therefore, he should happen to utter a truth, it cannot be *his* utterance, for he cannot distinguish between truth and falsehood, and he cannot have a personal motive for uttering what, without his knowing it, happens to be true, since motive implies emotion and the fool is presumed to have none. It can only be the voice of God using him as His mouthpiece. God is as far above the superman-King, whose earthly representative he is, as the King is above ordinary mortals, so that the voice of God is a voice, the only one, which the King must admit that it is his duty to obey. Hence the only individual who can speak to the King with authority, not as a subject, is the fool.

The position of the King's Fool is not an easy one. It is obvious that God uses him as a mouthpiece only occasionally, for, most of the time, what he says is patently nonsense, the words of a fool. At all moments when he is not divinely inspired but just a fool he is subhuman, not a subject, but a slave with no human rights who may be whipped like an animal if he is a nuisance. On the occasions when he happens to speak the truth, he cannot, being a fool, say, "This time I am not speaking nonsense as I usually do, but the truth"; it rests with the King to admit the difference and since truth is often unwelcome and hard to admit, it is not surprising that the fool's life should be a rough one.

*Fool: Prithee, nuncle, keep a schoolmaster that can teach thy fool to lie.*

*Lear: An you lie, sirrah, we'll have you whipped.*
*Fool: I marvel what kin thou and thy daughters are. They'll have me whipped for speaking true; thou'lt have me whipped for lying; and sometimes I am whipped for holding my peace. I had rather be any kind of thing than a fool. And yet, I would not be thee, nuncle.*

It was said above that the cognitive ego never uses the imperative mood, always the indicative or the conditional: it does not say "Do such-and-such!"; it says "Such-and-such *is* the case. *If* you want such-and-such a result, you can obtain it by doing as follows. What you want to do, your emotive self can tell you, not I. What you ought to do, your conscience can tell you, not I." Nor can it compel the volitional ego to listen to it; the choice of listening or refusing to listen lies with the latter.

*Truth's a dog must to kennel; he must be whipped out when Lady the brach may stand by the fire and stink.*

We are told that, after Cordelia's departure for France after Lear's first fatal folly, his first "mad" act, the fool started to pine away. After the Third Act, he mysteriously vanishes from the play, and when Lear appears without him, Lear is irremediably mad. At the very end, just before his death, Lear suddenly exclaims "And my poor fool is hanged!", and it is impossible for the audience to know if he is actually referring to the fool or suffering from aphasia and meaning to say Cordelia whom we know to have been hanged.

The fool, that is, seems to stand for Lear's sense of reality which he rejects. Not for his conscience. The fool never speaks to him, as Kent does, in the name of morality. It was immoral of Lear to make the dowries of his daughters proportionate to their capacity to express their affection for their father, but not necessarily mad because he (and the audience) has no reason to suppose that Cordelia has any less talent for expressing affection than her sisters. Rationally, there is no reason why she should not have surpassed them. Her failure in the competition is due to a moral refusal, not to a lack of talent. Lear's reaction to Cordelia's speech, on the other hand, is not immoral but mad because he knows that, in fact, Cordelia

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loves him and that Goneril and Regan do not. From that moment on, his sanity is, so to speak, on the periphery of his being instead of at its centre, and the dramatic manifestation of this shift is the appearance of the fool who stands outside him as a second figure and is devoted to Cordelia. As long as passion has not totally engulfed him, the fool can appear at his side, labouring "to outjest/His heart struck injuries." There is still a chance, however faint, that he may realise the facts of his situation and be restored to sanity. Thus, when Lear begins to address the furniture as if it were his daughters, the fool remarks:

*I cry you mercy. I took you for a joint-stool.*

In other words, there is still an element of theatre in Lear's behaviour, as a child will talk to inanimate objects as if they were people, while knowing that, in reality, they are not. But when this chance has passed and Lear has descended into madness past recall, there is nothing for the fool to represent and he must disappear.

Frequently the fool makes play with the words *knave* and *fool*. A knave is one who disobeys the imperatives of conscience; a fool is one who cannot hear or understand them. Though the cognitive ego is, morally, a "fool" because conscience speaks not to it but to the volitional ego, yet the imperative of duty can never be in contradiction to the actual facts of the situation, as the imperative of passion can be and frequently is. The socratic doctrine that to know the good is to will it, that sin is ignorance, is valid if by knowing one means listening to what one knows, and by ignorance, wilful ignorance. If that is what one means, then, though not all fools are knaves, all knaves are fools.

*Lear: Dost thou call me fool, boy?*
*Fool: All thy other titles thou hast given away; that thou wast born with.*
*Kent: This is not altogether fool, my lord.*
*Fool: No, faith, lords and great men will not let me. If I had a monopoly on't; they would have part of it.*

Ideally, in a stage production, Lear and the fool should be of the same physical type; they should both be athletic mesomorphs. The difference should be in their respective sizes. Lear should be as huge as possible, the fool as tiny

## VIII

*Body: O who shall me deliver whole*
*From bonds of this tyrannic soul?*
*Which, stretcht upright, impales me so*
*That mine own precipice I go. . . .*
*Soul: What Magick could me thus confine*
*Within another's grief to pine?*
*Where whatsoever it complain,*
*I feel, that cannot feel, the pain. . . .*
Andrew Marvell

*Valentine: Belike, boy, then you are in love; for last morning you could not see to wipe my shoes.*
*Speed: True, sir; I was in love with my bed. I thank you, you swinged me for my love, which makes me the bolder to chide you for yours.*
Shakespeare, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*

SHAKESPEARE'S last play, *The Tempest*, is a disquieting work. Like the other three comedies of his late period, *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, and *A Winter's Tale*, it is concerned with a wrong done, repentance, penance, and reconciliation but, whereas the others all end in a blaze of forgiveness and love—"Pardon's the word to all"—in *The Tempest*, both the repentance of the guilty and the pardon of the injured seem more formal than real. Of the former, Alonso is the only one who seems genuinely sorry; the repentance of the rest, both the courtly characters, Antonio and Sebastian, and the low, Trinculo and Stephano, is more the prudent promise of the punished and frightened, "I won't do it again. It doesn't pay," than any change of heart: and Prospero's forgiving is more the contemptuous pardon of a man who knows that he has his enemies completely at his mercy than a heartfelt reconciliation. His attitude to all of them is expressed in his final pardon to Caliban:

*an you look*
*To have my pardon trim it handsomely.*

One must admire Prospero because of his talents and his strength; one cannot possibly like him. He has the coldness of someone who has come to the conclusion that human nature is not worth much, that human relations are, at their best, pretty sorry affairs. Even towards the innocent young lovers, Ferdinand and

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Miranda, and their "brave new world," his attitude is one of mistrust so that he has to preach them a sermon on the dangers of anticipating their marriage vows. One might excuse him if he included himself in his critical scepticism but he never does; it never occurs to him that he, too, might have erred and be in need of pardon. He says of Caliban:

*born devil on whose nature*
*Nurture can never stick, on whom my pains,*
*Humanely taken, all, all lost, quite lost.*

But Shakespeare has written Caliban's part in such a way that, while we have to admit that Caliban is both brutal and corrupt, a "lying slave" who can be prevented from doing mischief only "by stripes not kindness," we cannot help feeling that Prospero is largely responsible for his corruption, and that, in the debate between them, Caliban has the best of the argument.

Before Prospero's arrival, Caliban had the island to himself, living there in a state of savage innocence. Prospero attempts to educate him, in return for which Caliban shows him all the qualities of the isle. The experiment is brought to a halt when Caliban tries to rape Miranda, and Prospero abandons any hope of educating him further. He does not, however, sever their relation and turn Caliban back to the forest; he changes its nature and, instead of trying to treat Caliban as a son, makes him a slave whom he rules by fear. This relation is profitable to Prospero:

*as it is*
*We cannot miss him. He does make our fire,*
*Fetch in our wood, and serve us in offices*
*That profit us,*

but it is hard to see what profit, material or spiritual, Caliban gets out of it. He has lost his savage freedom:

*For I am all the subjects that you have*
*Which first was mine own king,*

and he has lost his savage innocence:

*You taught me language and my profit on't*
*Is, I know how to curse,*

so that he is vulnerable to further corruption when he comes into contact with the civilised vices of Trinculo and Stephano. He is hardly to be blamed, then, if he regards the virtues of civilisation with hatred as responsible for his condition:

*Remember*
*First to possess his books, for without them*
*He's but a sot, as I am.*

As a biological organism Man is a natural creature subject to the necessities of nature; as a being with consciousness and will, he is at the same time an historical person with the freedom of the spirit. *The Tempest* seems to me a manichean work, not because it shows the relation of Nature to Spirit as one of conflict and hostility, which in fallen man it is, but because it puts the blame for this upon Nature and makes the Spirit innocent. Such a view is the exact opposite of the view expressed by Dante:

*Lo naturale è sempre senza errore*
*me l'altro puôte errar per male obbietto*
*o per poco o per troppo di vigore.*
(The natural is always without error/but the other may err through evil purpose/or for lack or excess of vigour.)

The natural can never desire too much or too little because the natural good is the mean—too much and too little are both painful to its natural well-being. The natural, conforming to necessity, cannot imagine possibility. The closest it can come to a relation with the possible is as a vague dream; without Prospero, Ariel can only be known to Caliban as "sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not." The animals cannot fall because the words of the tempter "Ye shall be as gods" are in the future tense, and the animals have no future tense, for the future tense implies the possibility of doing something that has not been done before, and that they cannot imagine.

Man can never know his "nature" because knowing is itself a spiritual and historical act; his physical sensations are always accompanied by conscious emotions. It is impossible to remember a physical sensation of pleasure or pain; the moment it ceases one cannot recall it, and all one remembers is the emotion of happiness or fear which accompanied it. On the

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other hand, a sensory stimulus can recall forgotten emotions associated with a previous occurrence of the same stimulus, as when Proust eats the cake.

It is unfortunate that the word Flesh, set in contrast to Spirit, is bound to suggest, not what the Gospels and St. Paul intended it to mean, the whole physical-historical nature of fallen man, but his physical nature alone, a suggestion very welcome to our passion for reproving and improving others instead of examining our own consciences. For the more "fleshly" a sin is the more obviously public it is, and the easier to prevent by the application of a purely external discipline. Thus the sin of gluttony exists in acts of gluttony, in eating, drinking, smoking too much, etc. If a man restrains himself from such excess, or is restrained by others, he ceases to be a glutton; the phrase "gluttonous thoughts" apart from gluttonous acts is meaningless.

As Christ's comment on the Seventh Commandment indicates, the sin of lust is already "unfleshly" to the degree that it is possible to have lustful thoughts without lustful deeds, but the former are still "fleshly" in that the thinker cannot avoid knowing what they are; he may insist that his thoughts are not sinful but he cannot pretend that they are not lustful. Further, the relation between thought and act is still direct. The thought is the thought of a specific act. The lustful man cannot be a hypocrite to himself, except through a symbolic transformation of his desires into images which are not consciously lustful. But the more "spiritual" the sin, the more indirect is the relation between thought and act, and the easier it is to conceal the sin from others and oneself. I have only to watch a glutton at the dinner-table to see that he is a glutton, but I may know someone for a very long time before I realise that he is an envious man, for there is no act which is in itself envious; there are only acts done in the spirit of envy, and there is often nothing about the acts themselves to show that they are done from envy and not from love. It is always possible, therefore, for the envious man to conceal from himself the fact that he is envious and to believe that he is acting from the highest of motives. While, in the case of the purely spiritual sin of pride, there is no "fleshly" element of the concrete whatsoever, so that no man, however closely he observes others, however strictly he examine himself, can ever know if they or he are proud; if he finds traces of any of the other six mortal sins, he can infer pride, because pride is fallen "spirit-in-itself" and the source of all the other sins, but he cannot draw the reverse inference and, because he finds no traces of the other six, say categorically that he, or another, is not proud.

If man's physical nature could speak when his spirit rebukes it for its corruption, it would have every right to say, "Well, who taught me my bad habits?"; as it is, it has only one form of protest, sickness; in the end, all it can do is destroy itself in an attempt to murder its master.

Over against Caliban, the embodiment of the natural, stands the invisible spirit of imagination, Ariel. (In a stage production, Caliban should be as monstrously conspicuous as possible, and, indeed, suggest, as far as decency permits, the phallic. Ariel, on the other hand, except when he assumes a specific disguise at Prospero's orders, e.g. when he appears as a harpy, should, ideally be invisible, a disembodied voice, an ideal which, in these days of microphones and loudspeakers, should be realisable.)

Caliban was once innocent but has become corrupt; his initial love for Prospero has turned into hatred. The terms innocent and corrupt cannot be applied to Ariel because he is beyond good and evil; he can neither love nor hate, he can only play. It was not sinful of Eve to imagine the possibility of being as a god knowing good and evil: her sin lay in desiring to realise that possibility when she knew it was forbidden her, and her desire did not come from her imagination, for imagination is without desire and is, therefore, incapable of distinguishing between permitted and forbidden possibilities; it only knows that they are imaginatively possible. Similarly, imagination cannot distinguish the possible from the impossible; to it the impossible is a species of the genus possible, not another genus. I can perfectly well imagine that I might be a hundred

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feet high or a champion heavy-weight boxer, and I do myself no harm in so doing, provided I do so playfully, without desire. I shall, however, come to grief if I take the possibility seriously, which I can do in two ways. Desiring to become a heavy-weight boxer, I may deceive myself into thinking that the imaginative possibility is a real possibility and waste my life trying to become the boxer I never can become. Or, desiring to become a boxer, but realising that it is, for me impossible, I may refuse to relinquish the desire and turn on God and my neighbour in a passion of hatred and rejection because I cannot have what I want. So Richard III, to punish existence for his misfortune in being born a hunchback, decides to become a villain.

Imagination is beyond good *and* evil, but it is only with the help of imagination that I can become good *or* evil. Without imagination I remain an innocent animal, unable to become anything but what I already am. In order to become what I should become, therefore, I have to put my imagination to work, to limit its playful activities, to imagining those possibilities which, for me, are both permissible and real; if I allow it to be the master and play exactly as it likes, then I shall remain in a dream-like state of imagining everything I might become, without getting round to ever becoming anything. But, once imagination has done its work for me to the degree that, with its help, I have become what I should become, imagination has a right to demand its freedom to play without any limitations, for there is no longer any danger that I shall take its play seriously. Hence the relation between Prospero and Ariel is contractual, and, at the end of the drama, Ariel is released.

If *The Tempest* is over-pessimistic and manichean, *The Magic Flute* is over-optimistic and pelagian. At the end of the opera a double wedding is celebrated; the representative of the spiritual, Tamino, finds his happiness in Pamina and has attained wisdom while the chorus sing:

> *Es seigte die Stärke und krönet zum Lohn.*
> *Die Schönheit und Weisheit mit ewigen Kron.*
> (Might won and awarded the crown to beauty and wisdom.)

and, at the same time, the representative of the natural, Papageno, is rewarded with Papagena, and they sing together:

> *Erst einen kleinen Papageno*
> *Dann eine kleine Papagena*
> *Dann wieder einen Papageno*
> *Dann wieder eine Papagena.*
> (First a small Papageno/Then a small Papagena/Then again a Papageno/Then again a Papagena.)

expressing in innocent humility the same attitude which Caliban expresses in guilty defiance when Prospero accuses him of having tried to rape Miranda:

> *O Ho, O ho! Would't had been done.*
> *Thou didst prevent me; I had peopled else*
> *This isle with Calibans.*

Tamino obtains his reward because he has had the courage to risk his life undergoing the trials of Fire and Water; Papageno obtains his because he has had the humility to refuse to risk his life even if the refusal will mean that he must remain single. It is as if Caliban, when Prospero offered to adopt him and educate him, had replied: "Thank you very much, but clothes and speech are not for me; it is better I stay in the jungle."

According to *The Magic Flute*, it is possible for nature and spirit to coexist in man harmoniously and without conflict, provided both keep to themselves and do not interfere with each other, and that, further, the natural has the freedom to refuse to be interfered with.

The greatest of spirit-nature pairs and the most orthodox is, of course Don Quixote-Sancho Panza. Unlike Prospero and Caliban, their relationship is harmonious and happy; unlike Tamino and Papageno, it is dialectical; each affects the other. Further, both they and their relationship are comic; Don Quixote is comically mad, Sancho Panza is comically sane, and each finds the other a lovable figure of fun, an endless source of diversion. It is this omnipresent comedy that makes the book orthodox; present the relationship as tragic and the conclusion is manichean, present either or both of the characters as serious, and the conclusion is pagan or pelagian. The man who takes seriously the command of Christ to take

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up his cross and follow Him must, if he is serious, see himself as a comic figure, for he is not the Christ, only an ordinary man, yet he believes that the command "Be ye perfect" is seriously addressed to himself. Worldly "sanity" will say, "I am not Christ, only an ordinary man. For me to think that I can become perfect would be madness. Therefore, the command cannot seriously be addressed to me." The other can only say, "It is madness for me to attempt to obey the command, for it seems impossible; nevertheless, since I believe it is addressed to me, I must believe that it is possible"; in proportion as he takes the command seriously, that is, he will see himself as a comic figure. To take himself seriously would mean that he thought of himself, not as an ordinary man, but as Christ.

For Christ is not a model to be imitated, like Hector, or Aristotle's megalopsych, but the Way to be followed. If a man thinks that the megalopsych is a desirable model, all he has to do is to read up how the megalopsych behaves and imitate him, e.g. he will be careful, when walking, not to swing his arms.

But the Way cannot be imitated, only followed; a Christian who is faced with a moral problem cannot look up the answer in the Gospels. If someone, for instance, were to let his hair and beard grow till he looked like some popular pious picture of Christ, put on a white linen robe and ride into town on a donkey, we should know at once that he was either a madman or a fake. At first sight Don Quixote's madness seems to be of this kind. He believes that the world of the Romances is the real world and that, to be a knight-errant, all he has to do is imitate the Romances exactly. Like Lear, he cannot distinguish imaginative possibilities from actualities and treats analogies as identities; Lear thinks a stool is his daughter, Don Quixote thinks windmills are giants, but their manias are not really the same. Lear might be said to be suffering from worldly madness. The worldly man goes mad when the actual state of affairs becomes too intolerable for his *amour-propre* to accept; Lear cannot face the fact that he is no longer a man of power or that he has brought his present situation upon himself by his unjust competition. Don Quixote's madness, on the other hand, might be called holy madness, for *amour-propre* has nothing to do with his delusions. If his madness were of Lear's kind, then, in addition to believing that he must imitate the knight-errants of old, he would have endowed himself in his imagination with all their gifts, e.g. with the youth and strength of Amadis de Gaul: but he does nothing of the kind; he knows that he is past fifty and penniless; nevertheless, he believes he is called to be a knight-errant. The knight-errant sets out to win glory by doing great deeds and to win the love of his lady, and whatever trials and defeats he may suffer on the way, in the end he triumphs. Don Quixote, however, fails totally; he accomplishes nothing, he does not win his lady, and, as if that were not ignominious enough, what he does win is a parody of what a knight-errant is supposed to win, for he does, in fact, become famous and admired—as a madman. If his were a worldly madness, *amour-propre* would demand that he add to his other delusions the delusion of having succeeded, the delusion that the welcome he receives everywhere is due to the fame of his great deeds (a delusion which his audience do everything to encourage), but Don Quixote is perfectly well aware that he has failed to do anything which he set out to do.

At the opposite pole to madness stands philistine realism. Madness says "Windmills are giants"; philistine realism says "Windmills are only windmills; giants are only giants," and then adds "Windmills really exist because they provide me with flour; giants are imaginary and do not exist because they provide me with nothing." (A student of psychoanalysis who says "Windmills and giants are only phallic symbols" is both philistine and mad.) Madness confuses analogies with identities; neither can say "Windmills are like giants."

At first sight Sancho Panza seems a philistine realist. "I go," he says, "with a great desire to make money"; it may seem to the reader hardly "realistic" of Sancho Panza to believe that he will gain a penny, far less an island governorship, by following Don Quixote, but is not the philistine realist who believes in nothing but material satisfactions precisely the

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type to whom it is easiest to sell a non-existent gold mine?

The sign that Sancho Panza is not a philistine but a "holy" realist is the persistence of his hope of getting something when he has realised that his master is mad. It is as if a man who had been sold a non-existent gold-mine continued to believe in its existence after he had discovered that the seller was a crook. It is clear that, whatever Sancho Panza may say, his motives for following his master are love of his master and that equally unrealistic of motives, love of adventure for its own sake, a poetic love of fun. Just as Don Quixote wins fame, but fame as a madman, so Sancho Panza actually becomes the Governor of an island, but as a practical joke; as Governor he obtains none of the material rewards which a philistine would hope for, yet he enjoys himself enormously. Sancho Panza is a realist in that it is always the actual world, the immediate moment, which he enjoys, not an imaginary world or an anticipated future, but a "holy" realist in that he enjoys the actual and immediate for its own sake, not for any material satisfactions it provides.

Don Quixote and Sancho Panza are both inveterate quoters: what the Romances are to the one, proverbs are to the other. A Romance is a history, feigned or real. It recounts a series of unique and extraordinary events which have, or are purported to have, happened in the past. The source of interest is in the events themselves, not in the literary style in which they are narrated; as long as the reader learns what happened, it is a matter of indifference to him whether the style is imaginative or banal. A proverb has nothing to do with history, for it states, or claims to state, a truth which is valid at all times. The content of "A stitch in time saves nine" belongs to the same class as a statement of empirical science like "bodies attract each other in direct proportion to their masses." The interest of a proverb, therefore, lies not in its content but in the unique way in which that content is expressed; the content is always banal because it is a statement of empirical science, and a scientific statement which was not banal would not be true.

Proverbs belong to the natural world where the Model and imitation of the Model are valid concepts. A proverb tells one exactly what one should do or avoid doing whenever the situation comes up to which it applies: if the situation comes up the proverb applies exactly; if it does not come up, the proverb does not apply at all. Romances, as we have seen, belong to the historical world of the spirit, where the Model is replaced by the Way, and imitation by following. But in man, these two worlds are not separate but dialectically related; the proverb, as an expression of the natural, admits its relation to the historical by its valuation of style; the romance, as an expression of the historical, admits its relation to the natural by its indifference to style.

Don Quixote's lack of illusions about his own powers is a sign that his madness is not worldly but holy, a forsaking of the world to follow, but without Sancho Panza, it would not be Christian. For his madness to be Christian, he must have a neighbour, someone other than himself about whom he has no delusions but loves as himself. Without Sancho Panza, Don Quixote would be without neighbours, and the kind of religion implied would be one in which love of God was not only possible without but also incompatible with love of one's neighbour.

## IX

*He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.*

Luke, XXII

*che per quanti si dice più li nostro*
*tanto possiede più di ben ciascuno.*

Dante, *Purgatorio*, XV

(the more he says he is one of us/the more each one of us possesses.)

WHEN a lover tells his beloved that she is his mistress and that he desires to be her servant, what he is trying, honestly or hypocritically, to say is something as follows: "As you know, I find you beautiful, an object of desire. I know that for true love such desire is not enough; I must also love you, not as an object of my desire, but as you are in yourself; I must desire your self-fulfilment. I cannot know you as you are nor prove that I desire

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your self-fulfilment, unless you tell me what you want and allow me to try and give it to you."

The proverb "No man is a hero to his own valet" does not mean that no valet admires his master, but that a valet knows his master as he really is, admirable or contemptible, because it is a valet's job to supply the wants of his master, and, if you know what somebody wants, you know what he is like. It is possible for a master to have not the faintest inkling of what his servant is really like—unless his servant loves him, it is certain that he never will—but it is impossible for a servant, whether he be curious or indifferent, not to know exactly what his master is like, for the latter reveals himself every time he gives an order.

To illustrate the use of the master-servant relationship as a parable of Agape, I will take two examples from books which are not great works of art but for that very reason present the parable in a clear, simplified form: *Round the World in Eighty Days* by Jules Verne, and the *Jeeves* series by P. G. Wodehouse.

Mr. Fogg, as Jules Verne depicts him in his opening chapter, is a kind of stoic saint. He is a bachelor with ample private means and does no work, but he is never idle and has no vices; he plays whist at his club every evening but never more or less than the same number of hands, and, when he wins, he gives the money to charity. He knows all about the world for he is a religious reader of the newspapers, but he takes no part in its affairs; he has no friends and no enemies; he has never been known to show emotion of any kind; he seems to live "outside of any social relation." If "apathy," in the stoic sense, is the highest virtue, then Fogg is a saint. His most striking trait, however, is one which seems to have been unknown in Classical times, a ritual mania about the exact time, an idolatry of the clock—his own tells the second, the minute, the hour, the day, the month, and the year. He not only does exactly the same thing every day, but at exactly the same moment. Classical authors like Theophrastus have described very accurately most characterological types, but none of them, so far as I know, has described The Punctual Man (the type to which I personally belong) which cannot tell if it is hungry unless it first looks at the clock. It was never said in praise of any Cæsar, for instance, that he made whatever was the Roman equivalent for trains run on time. I have heard it suggested that the first punctual people in history were the monks—at their Office hours. It is certain, at least, that the first serious analysis of the human experience of time was undertaken by St. Augustine, and that the notion of punctuality, of action at an exact moment, depends on drawing a distinction between natural and historical time which Christianity encouraged if it did not invent.*

By and large, at least the ancients thought of time either as oscillating to and fro like a pendulum or as moving round and round like a wheel, and the notion of historical time moving in an irreversible unilateral direction was strange to them. Both oscillation and cyclical movement provide a notion of change, but of change *for-a-time*; this *for-a-time* may be a long time—the pendulum may oscillate or the wheel revolve very slowly—but sooner or later all events re-occur: there is no place for a notion of absolute novelty, of a unique event which occurs once and for all at a particular moment in time. This latter notion cannot be derived from our objective experience of the outside world—all the movements we can see there are either oscillatory or cyclical—but only form our subjective inner experience of time in such phenomena as memory and anticipation.

So long as we think of it objectively, time is Fate or Chance, the factor in our lives for which we are not responsible, and about which we can do nothing; but when we begin to think of it subjectively, we feel responsible for *our* time, and the notion of punctuality arises. In training himself to be superior to circumstances, the ancient stoic would discipline his passions because he knew what a threat they could be to the apathy he sought to acquire, but it would not occur to him to discipline his time, because he was unaware that it was his. A modern stoic like Mr. Fogg knows that the

* The Greek notion of *kairos*, the propitious moment for doing something, contained the seed of the notion of punctuality, but the seed did not flower.

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surest way to discipline passion is to discipline time: decide what you want or ought to do during the day, then always do it at exactly the same moment every day, and passion will give you no trouble.

Mr. Fogg has been so successful with himself that he is suffering from hybris; he is convinced that nothing can happen to him which he has not foreseen. Others, it is true, are often unreliable, but the moment he finds them so, he severs relations with them. On the morning when the story opens, he has just dismissed his servant for bringing him his shaving water at a temperature of 84° instead of the proper 86° and is looking for a new one. His conception of the just relation between master and servant is that the former must issue orders which are absolutely clear and unchanging—the master has no right to puzzle his servant or surprise him with an order for which he is not prepared—and the latter must carry them out as impersonally and efficiently as a machine—one slip and he is fired. The last thing he looks for in a servant or, for that matter, in anyone else, is a personal friend.

On the same morning Passepartout has given notice to Lord Longsferry because he cannot endure to work in a chaotic household where the master is "brought home too frequently on the shoulders of policemen." Himself a sanguine, mercurial character, what he seeks in a master is the very opposite of what he would seek in a friend. He wishes his relation to his master to be formal and impersonal; in a master, therefore, he seeks his opposite, the phlegmatic character. His ideal of the master-servant relation happens, therefore, to coincide with Fogg's, and to the mutual satisfaction of both, he is interviewed and engaged.

But that evening the unforeseen happens, the bet which is to send them both off round the world. It is his hybris which tempts Mr. Fogg into making the bet; he is so convinced that nothing unforeseen can occur which he cannot control that he cannot allow his club mates to challenge this conviction without taking up the challenge. Further, unknown to him, by a chance accident which he could not possibly have foreseen, a bank robbery has just been committed, and the description of the thief given to the police plus his sudden departure from England have put him under suspicion. Off go Mr. Fogg and Passepartout, then, pursued by the detective Fix. In the boat-train Passepartout suddenly remembers that in the haste of packing he has left the gas-fire burning in his bedroom. Fogg does not utter a word of reproach but merely remarks that it will burn at Passepartout's expense till they return. Mr. Fogg is still the stoic with the stoic conception of justice operating as impersonally and inexorably as the laws of nature. It is a fact that it was Passepartout not he who forgot to turn off the gas; the hurry caused by his own sudden decision may have made it difficult for Passepartout to remember, but it did not make it impossible: therefore Passepartout is responsible for his forgetfulness and must pay the price.

Then in India the decisive moment arrives: they run into preparations for a suttee, against her will, of a beautiful young widow, Aoode. For the first time in his life, apparently, Mr. Fogg is confronted personally with human injustice and suffering, and a moral choice. If, like the priest and the levite, he passes by on the other side, he will catch the boat at Calcutta and win his bet with ease; if he attempts to save her, he will miss his boat and run a serious risk of losing his bet. Abandoning his stoic apathy, he chooses the second alternative, and from that moment on his relationship with Passepartout ceases to be impersonal. It is now one of *philia*. Moreover, he discovers that Passepartout has capacities which his normal duties as a servant would never have revealed, but which in this emergency situation are particularly valuable because Mr. Fogg himself is without them. But for Passepartout's capacity for improvisation and acting which allow him successfully to substitute himself for the corpse on the funeral pyre, Aoode would never have been saved. Hitherto, Mr. Fogg has always believed that there was nothing of importance anyone else could do which he could not do as well or better himself; for the first time in his life he abandons that belief.

Hitherto, Passepartout has thought of his master as an unfeeling automaton, just, but incapable of generosity or self-sacrifice; had he

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not had this unexpected revelation, he would certainly have betrayed Mr. Fogg to Fix, for the detective succeeds in convincing him that his master is a bank robber, and, according to the stoic notion of impersonal justice which Mr. Fogg had seemed to exemplify, that would be his duty, but having seen him act personally, Passepartout refuses to assist impersonal justice.

Later, when the Trans-American express is attacked by Indians, it is Passepartout's athletic ability, a quality irrelevant to a servant's normal duties, which saves the lives of Mr. Fogg and Aoode at the risk of his own, for he is captured by the Indians. In such an act the whole contractual master-servant relation is transcended; that one party shall undertake to sacrifice his life for the other cannot be a clause in any contract. The only possible repayment is a similar act, and Mr. Fogg lets the relief train go without him, sacrificing what may well be his last chance of winning his bet, and goes back at the risk of his life to rescue Passepartout.

Like Mr. Fogg, Bertie Wooster is a bachelor with private means who does no work, but there all resemblance ceases. Nobody could possibly be less of a stoic than the latter. If he has no vices it is because his desires are too vague and too fleeting for him to settle down to one. Hardly a week passes without Bertie Wooster thinking he has at last met The Girl; for a week he imagines he is her Tristan, but a week later he has forgotten her as completely as Don Giovanni forgets; besides, nothing ever happens. It is nowhere suggested that he owned a watch or that, if he did, he could tell the time by it. By any worldly moral standard he is a footler whose existence is of no importance to anybody. Yet it is Bertie Wooster who has the incomparable Jeeves for his servant. Jeeves could any day find a richer master or a place with less arduous duties, yet it is Bertie Wooster whom he chooses to serve. The Lucky Simpleton is a common folk-tale hero: for example, the Third Son who succeeds in the Quest appears, in comparison with his two elder brothers, the least talented, but his ambition to succeed is equal to theirs. He sets out bravely into the unknown and unexpectedly triumphs. But Bertie Wooster is without any ambition whatsoever and has not lifted a finger to get what, for him, is even better than a beautiful Princess, the perfect omniscient nanny who does everything for him and keeps him out of trouble without, however, ever trying, as most nannies will, to educate and improve him.

"*I say, Jeeves, a man I met at the club last night told me to put my shirt on Privateer for the two o'clock race this afternoon. How about it?*"

"*I should not advocate it, sir. The stable is not sanguine.*"

"*Talking of shirts, have those mauve ones I ordered arrived yet?*"

"*Yes, sir. I sent them back.*"

"*Sent them back?*"

"*Yes, sir. They would not have become you.*"

The Quest hero often encounters an old beggar or animal who offers him advice: if, too proud to imagine that such apparently inferior creatures could know better than himself, he rejects the advice, it has fatal consequences, but if he is humble enough to listen and obey, he achieves, thanks to their help, his goal. But, however humble he may be, he dreams of becoming a hero; he may be willing to take advice from his inferiors, but he is convinced that, potentially, he is a superior person, a prince-to-be. Bertie Wooster, on the other hand, not only knows that he is a person of no account, but also never dreams that he will become anything else; to his dying day he will, he knows, remain a footler who needs a nanny: at the same time, he is completely without envy of other people who are of some account. He has, in fact, that rarest of virtues, humility, and so he is blessed: it is he and no other who has for his servant the god-like Jeeves.

"*All the other great thinkers of the age are simply in the crowd watching you go by.*"

"*Thank you very much, sir. I endeavour to give satisfaction.*"

So speaks comically—and in what other mode than the comic could it, on earth, truthfully speak?—the voice of Agape, of Holy Love.

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# *Letters from Scandinavia*
# *III. Finland*

## Land of the Strong and Silent

THE strangest paradox about Finland is the proximity of Russia and the remoteness of Communism.

An hour after my arrival in Helsinki, some friends bundled me into a car and drove me out of the city. The only peculiarity I noticed in the first ten minutes of our journey was that the kilometre stones showed no figures, only blue circles. As if the road leads nowhere. It does actually lead to Nowhere: to Russian territory. We were driving westward and in about twenty minutes we arrived at the frontier of the Porkkala area, leased to Russia as a naval and military base, for fifty years. There was a sign in three languages (Finnish, Swedish, and English) warning us that taking pictures was forbidden. A few yards further along, another sign informed us that it was forbidden to proceed beyond that sign without a special permit. There we stopped. There was a bridge in front of us with military huts on both sides of it. A sergeant dashed out of the Finnish hut, walked up to our car, and asked what we wanted. My friend explained that we were sightseers, whereupon the sergeant grinned, walked back, and disappeared in the hut. Trying to see what was on the other side we drove around, but we could discover no sign of life on the Russian side, not even a frontier guard. "Watching the Russians"—a favourite pastime of visitors—consists in watching spots where the Russians might be, should be, or are supposed to be—but they are invisible. At last we saw a cat. "It's a Russian cat," my friend explained. "When the Finns evacuated this territory they did not leave behind even a Finnish cat."

In the middle of the bridge there is a red mark—beyond that is Russian territory. If swimmers or people in boats stray over, the Russians arrest the culprits, question them for ten or twelve days as suspected spies, and then usually release them.

The proximity of Russia is felt everywhere. It is not a dark shadow; it is not a terrible warning; it is a fact which the Finns accept as they accept the rigours of the climate. Helsinki —a city Eastern and Western, Scandinavian and European, ugly and charming, provincial, almost village-like and metropolitan at the same time—has kept to some extent the characteristics of a Russian provincial city, which it never was. The streets teem with Russian-made automobiles (in addition to those of English, American, French, and German make) and the Finns hate to admit that the Russian cars are very good. You can see a public monument erected to Katherine the Great, former Czarina of all the Russians; on one of Helsinki's main squares there is a statue of Alexander II, a "good Czar" from the Finnish point of view. This statue—unless I am mistaken—is the only statue of a Russian Czar left standing anywhere in the world. Helsinki has a regular rail connection with Leningrad and is linked by plane to Moscow, also via Leningrad. The train for Leningrad leaves three times a week, in the late hours of the night, from a suburban station. The passengers (almost exclusively Russians) are carefully screened from view and are not allowed to see Karelian territory, ceded to Russia after the war. The train itself consists of six old-fashioned carriages with no intercommunication between them. The planes flying in the same direction are also Soviet planes only. After the war the Americans flew to Leningrad but as soon as the American plane



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touched down, a platoon of Russian infantry —with fixed bayonets—surrounded the plane and scared the passengers to death. So the Americans stopped flying to Leningrad. The railway-line to the west, to Turku, passes through the leased Porkkala area and has been called "the longest tunnel in the world." The train has to stop at the frontier so that the Finnish engine and driver may be removed and a Russian engine and driver put in their place. Special shutters are lowered from the outside and then the train proceeds. It covers twenty miles in an hour and a quarter. At the other end of the leased territory the Russian engine and driver are removed and a Finnish engine and driver substituted. But no permits are required for the journey and no list of passengers exists; Senator McCarthy could travel through the Porkkala area in perfect safety.

RUSSIA is not only near; Russia is in the country. It has been asked millions of times: how is it possible that Finland has succeeded in remaining a free country, with free institutions and with a freely elected government dominated by the Agrarian party? It is true that the Finns carefully avoid anything that might provoke the Russians; on the other hand they do not flatter them. Their newspapers publish all the Western news unaltered and hardly print Tass messages at all. They are outspoken and seemingly quite unconcerned about their eastern neighbour. The Finns keep close contacts with Scandinavia, travel freely anywhere they choose, look to the West, and only keep an eye on Russia. How is all this possible?—asks every visitor and observer. Why isn't Finland a satellite on the Eastern and Central European pattern?

The stock answer given is that, during the war, the Finns were attacked by the Russians —the Russians being the aggressors—and in the end, the Russians gained what they wanted. The Karelian Isthmus and Viipuri, Finland's third city, were ceded to Russia, and Leningrad is now safe. In any case, should any power wish to attack Russia, it will hardly choose to pass through Finland—so the country's strategical importance is much smaller than that of Poland or Rumania. The Finns—the explanation goes on—put up a tough fight and the Russians are afraid of them.

The strategic part of this explanation is true —it is little pleasure to fight in Finland particularly during the winter—but the story about the terrified Russians is nonsense. If the Russians were afraid of the Finns—as they are afraid of the Poles and the Czechs—they would subjugate them, too, ruthlessly. The truth is that the Russians are quite pleased to have a free satellite; a satellite which is not a satellite at all. Finland is a shopwindow on the world, advertising how liberal and lenient Russia can be even to a defeated foe if she trusts him. The Russians do trust the Finns because they know them. They have a long history of mutual enmity which, as a rule, establishes a closer understanding between nations than a long alliance. In 1809 Sweden was compelled to give up her hold on Finland. The country then became an autonomous Grand Duchy of Russia and remained a Grand Duchy till 1917. The Poles—another subject-nation of the Russians—kept conspiring against the Czars and revolted against their rule at almost regular intervals. The Finns never revolted. The Russians often broke their promises and oppressed Finland—for instance, in the sixth decade of the last century the Czarist authorities banned all Finnish literature except economic and religious literature—but the Finns, on their part, always kept all their agreements and promises with scrupulous fairness.

The Finns are a passionate people. They have a passion for keeping agreements. They also have a passion for paying debts. After the First World War the Finns were the only European nation to pay back their debts to America while all other debtors defaulted. Now again they have paid the terrible and excessive reparations to Russia to the last penny and according to schedule. On the Finnish 1,000-mark note there is a picture of an endless procession of nude men and women. (It is the most erotic legal tender in the world. I felt sorry whenever I had to part with a note.) It is said that the nudes symbolise the Finnish nation after having paid the reparations to Russia.

The Russians know the Finns well. The new satellites are eager to be servile to the Russians, but as soon as an opportunity arises the Communists will be overthrown in the satellite states and new, violently anti-Communist régimes installed. This will not happen in Finland. They agreed to cede Karelia with Viipuri, so they evacuated almost 500,000 people from this territory and there is no

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irredentism; they accepted the obligations to pay reparations and they have paid the reparations; they made certain other economic concessions and they are resigned to these facts, too. They dislike the Russians and the Russians accept this feeling as natural; but a dislike, even a hatred, entertained for centuries is a mellow hatred, it has some warmth and gentleness in it; it is like the hatred of a long marriage—you can rely on it. The other satellites—seen from Russia—lick the Russian boot but have a dagger hidden behind their backs; the Finns are openly anti-Russian in feeling but the Russians know that solemn agreements protect them better from the Finns than hosts of soldiers and thousands of guns would.

The Finns have another great advantage. They have a reactionary Prime Minister in the person of M. Kekkonen. I am not using the word in a derogatory sense, I only want to convey the idea that M. Kekkonen is considered an ultra-conservative statesman even by the standards of the British Labour Party. And the Russians simply adore reactionaries and get on very well with them. Kekkonen is their pet. As long as the Finns had a Social Democratic Premier, there was no end to trouble. Protests occurred almost daily and open threats were constantly made in the Soviet press. "Even a play by Sartre had to be taken off," a politician told me. "The Russians objected to it. Today they don't object to anything, we can do as we please. We could perform *Ninotchka* if we chose to." The Russians distrust Finnish Communists, too, just as they distrust American and English Communists. They are fully aware that if an ultimate test came, half of the Finnish Communists (who call themselves the Finnish People's Democratic Union and have 43 deputies out of 200) would turn out to be ardent nationalists. The Finnish Communists are not members of the Cominform. The Russians fancy Kekkonen alone and no one else. Kekkonen signed a Treaty of Friendship with the Russians and obtained miraculous terms: even if Finland is attacked, it is up to the Finns to say whether they want Russian help or not.

Russo-Finnish relations are based on the firm foundation of one-sided trust and mutual dislike. The Russians know that they can trust the Finns and they also know that should serious trouble arise, their difficulties would be quite out of proportion with any possible gains.

THE Finns are determined, often stubborn. They love being determined. They love talking about their achievements—and have always loved it. That's how the *Kalevala* came to be. They just couldn't stop talking about their heroic deeds and adventures—and one of the great epic poems of the world survived throughout the centuries.

In spite of this they are not at all boastful. They simply know that they are fine fellows: and they really are. Nobody stands on his dignity in Finland, there is a charming informality and casualness in the air. I was talking one day to an official in the Foreign Office and we were about to go out to have lunch together. As we were about to leave he rang up the Foreign Minister to ask him whether he would care to join us. He had already gone out for lunch. So the official asked me whether I should like to see the Prime Minister. I said I wouldn't mind. He picked up the receiver but put it back again and said that the Prime Minister must be extremely busy just now. "Doing what?" I asked him. "Forming a new government," he replied. That is how I learnt that the government had resigned that morning. (That crisis was solved by M. Kekkonen who formed an Agrarian-Swedish minority government instead of the coalition government he had headed previously.)

The Finnish character is, in many ways, the antipode of the American. They are a little sleepy and very introvert. A few months ago, in New York, a young man sat next to me in a train, going from Pennsylvania Station to Hicksville, Long Island. He started talking to me and in the forty minutes' journey he asked me hundreds of indiscreet questions, professional and personal. I am an easy victim—one only has to ask me straight questions to get straight answers. What the young man did not know about me before we parted was not worth knowing. I could have shared the same room with a Finn for twenty-five years and he would not have broached half of the subjects discussed during that train journey. Even a Finnish press-conference is a very discreet, subdued affair. Finnish journalists just do not ask any questions. It is not only from ticklish and indiscreet questions that they refrain; they refrain from questions in general. The idea is that if someone—a minister or a politician—has something to say, he will say it. Questions

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are unnecessary. Besides, I had the feeling they were not really interested.

You will soon find in Finland that they have an utterly different sense of Time. Time may fly but it does not matter at all. Time is not to be chased; it is to be enjoyed. You neither run against Time nor try to fight it; you walk comfortably with it. Time is your ally, not your enemy. Life may be short but constant rushing and running about only makes it shorter. A good Finnish lunch, for instance, goes on for hours and hours and a proper party for days and days. They do not try to prolong their pleasures; spending time in an unhurried, leisurely, vague way is itself the main pleasure. He who has time, is rich; and he who is poor, always has time. Consequently, if you are poor and wise, you are rich enough.

Material things are also unimportant. They know that life is hard—and their lives are much harder than ours; but it is also beautiful. They know exactly what they want from life, which the Americans, as a rule, don't know. The Finns do not go out of their way to look for novel pleasures; they learn rather to enjoy the simple things of life: nature, sunshine, a good talk, and a good book. It doesn't matter to them what their neighbour *is* or *has*. They live their own lives, not their neighbours' and not the Jones's. They are individualists in a sovereign yet simple way. If you travel around Europe, you will notice that there are three main types of military uniforms in use: the American, the British, and the Russian. A fourth is the Finnish which at first sight looks very original but on closer examination turns out to be an old German uniform to the waist and a Russian uniform from the waist down.

Every Finn is a plumber, carpenter, and builder. They would be ashamed to call in a professional for minor repairs and, generally speaking, they always prefer making things to buying them. Many people even weave their own clothes, make their own furniture, and build their own houses—which habit may lead to odd results now and then, but certainly avoids dreary uniformity.

The Finns are not very sophisticated and they lack imagination. They are lumberjacks, not wits; they feel more at home in the woods than they would have felt in the *salon* of Georges Sand. But the sunshine is not sophisticated either. And in Finland—which is not the land of permanent sunshine—you sense some cleanliness and warmth in the air, generated by human understanding and friendly interest. They do not wear masks and psychological false beards; they appear naked.

And they appear naked not only in the metaphorical sense of the word. You can see naked bathers everywhere—girls and boys, men and women. They do not make an exhibition of themselves—they will probably retire behind a bush when they see you approaching in a motor boat, but they do not really seem to care whether you see them or not. At some spots, special places are allocated for naked women and others for naked men but you also see them together often enough (just as in Norway). At first, I was surprised; and even interested. But this interest fades away quickly. You soon realise that pure and unashamed nakedness is rather dull. Once I met a party of young people who had been bathing together stark naked just before we met. One of the girls—now dressed properly, even elegantly—sat down in such a way, however, as to show her knees, whereupon all the men looked at her with interest.

(Yet, I cannot believe that nakedness is quite natural. I talked to many of these nudists and they all admitted that one always remains self-conscious about one's body. The fashion of naked bathing does not spring from erotic motives, it does not even spring from a desire to show yourself as you are. It simply springs from the wish to be kissed by the sun and get back nearer to nature. In that sense, nakedness is not a progressive but a retrograde step. The habit, practised in such a highly civilised community, does not mean that you just don't put on a bathing suit; it means that you discard it in an act of defiance.)

People all over the world have heard something about the bathing habits of the Scandinavians and Finns and the attempt is often made to dismiss these practices as immoral. The Finns believe, however, that displaying your sexual organs openly is not more immoral, in itself, than possessing them. Of course, extra-marital relationships do exist in Finland, just as they exist in other countries where people spend a great deal of money on elaborate and well-designed bathing costumes. But the Finns—or their Scandinavian neighbours—are not promiscuous and when discarding their bathing

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suits they do not discard morality—even in the strictest puritan sense of the word. On the contrary, the air is cleaner in Finland than in most other countries—with the exception of Norway and, to a lesser extent, Sweden. There is less lewdness, less furtive curiosity, silly giggling, dirty jokes, and pornographic literature and photographs than almost anywhere else. A dirty joke is not "sex" for them; and sex is not a dirty joke. They learn the "facts of life" as children, and sex plays its own, normal part in their lives. It is not an insignificant part but they make it less important by bravely accepting the challenge that you cannot have children—not many, anyway—without sex-life.

TAKING a bath, by the way, is the national passion of the Finns. Just as the English queue up (it is a necessity for them to indulge in this and some other excesses of self-discipline); just as the Americans rush about constantly in order to convince themselves by this endless waste of energy that they are doing their best for themselves and their family in a cruelly competitive world; just as the French talk to convince themselves of their intellectual superiority—the Finns bathe. This must be a symbolic act, maybe they feel that by accepting modern civilisation they are betraying nature —so near and dear to them—and they must cleanse themselves. But even if this explanation is far-fetched, the fact remains that having a bath is a national mania in Finland. If an average foreigner has ever heard any Finnish word at all, it is likely to be *sauna*, the name of the Finnish bath.

The sauna is a necessity of life. Wherever Finnish athletes compete, they build their saunas and, during the war, Finnish soldiers built saunas even in the front-line. When they began the reconstruction of Lapland—destroyed by the Germans—they first built saunas and then started planting potatoes. The idea of the Finnish bath is cleansing through perspiration. The fundamental difference between the Finnish and the Turkish bath is that in the Turkish bath the air is damp, while in the sauna it is dry—so you can bear incomparably greater heat. The sauna-habit is about a thousand years old and the Finns are very proud of their invention. They firmly maintain that the sauna *is* an invention, and an original invention at that. A little pamphlet, entitled "Sauna, the Finnish Bath" and written by H. J. Viherjuuri, explains: "The Finnish bath embodies the best features of the Roman and the damp Russian steam bath, without being *in any way* a compromise between the two." (My italics.) In the country, Saturday is the usual, almost compulsory sauna-day, but many people go to the sauna more than once a week. On such occasions the whole family baths together—all naked, of course. Guests and casual visitors are also invited. Many a romantic flirtation has started on such occasions. An American business man told me that when he came to Helsinki to negotiate a large contract, he was taken out to a sauna by four or five gentlemen. They sat down somewhere, all stark naked, and began to talk business. "What's wrong in that?"—I asked. He shook his head. "Nothing. I only wondered, how informal one could get." In 1937 the *Suomalaisen Saunan Ystävät* (Society of the Friends of the Finnish Bath) was established, in order to spread knowledge about the sauna and make it more popular. This seems to be about as essential as a society would be to make tea-drinking more popular in England.

One afternoon I was taken out to a sauna near Helsinki. We undressed and entered the steam-room. If I were an egg, I should now be soft-boiled because the temperature was about 220° Fahrenheit (8° above boiling point) and I stood it for about three minutes. It was not the heat that chased me out but my eyes, which could not bear the steam any longer. From the steam-room we rushed out to the sea and dived into the cold water. Afterwards we repeated this procedure—steam-room, sea, steam-room, sea—four times. In the winter, when people cannot jump into the sea, they roll in the snow. At last we settled down at the little tables on the terrace and drank ice-cold orangeade. I had a peculiar feeling sitting in a restaurant naked, with equally lightly clad gentlemen occupying the other tables. Quite a few small boats passed at a few yards distance but we paid no attention to each other. We moved inside and—I am sorry to report—omitted an important part of the ritual: we ought to have beaten each other up with birch switches. This is an essential part of the ceremony and I don't know why we left it out. It does not hurt at all—I am told—and livens up the blood circulation. Having missed a good hiding, we moved into a small room and were

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massaged and dried by ladies, dressed in white overalls. By ancient tradition, only ladies are eligible for these jobs and they did it not only well but with ferocious enthusiasm. We had a good, cold shower after that, then we dressed and were supposed to have a rest but we skipped it. I received, however, a document which made me a Knight of the Bath. It is an impressive looking document, I had it framed. It reads:

*"The Order of the Bath, Sauna Seura*
*Know ye all engineers of hot water and devilish devices:*

*THIS IS TO CERTIFY*

*to all of volcanic origin that in the flames, steam and glowing atmosphere of ARCTIC FINLAND, our Clean-Living Friend George Mikes, naked and unashamed, has been approved as a*

*KNIGHT OF THE SAUNA*

*at Waskiniemi by the frozen shores of Helsinki having observed the RITUAL OF ORDEAL by STEAM and Duly been Boiled Alive in all modesty and honour.*

*Witnessed in corpore toto: K. F. Hirvisalo, President of the Governing Body, Paul C. Suni, Member of the Body. Washed in all thoroughness by Elsa Konkari, Lady of the Bath."*

Before leaving the sauna I saw a letter—framed and hung up on the wall—written by Bernhard, Prince of the Netherlands, in which he thanked the President and Members of the Governing Body for his promotion to the rank of a Knight of the Bath. Not very long ago the American Minister to Helsinki visited this sauna (he was taken by the same gentleman who took me, too) and having visited the steam-room, went out in his sauna-costume to roll a bit in the snow. He was photographed in the process and the picture was charming, although somehow it lacked dignity. The photograph was published in *Life* as the "Picture of the Week." The American diplomat was subsequently, but very soon after these events, transferred to a faraway, Asiatic country, where there is neither sauna nor snow.

KEKKONEN'S government is supported by the Swedish Party. But being a Swede is not really a political conviction. The Swedish Party in Finland consists of people from all walks of life—rich and poor, small farmers and millionaire industrialists. So, on almost all questions, the Swedish Party can be easily split into two, and often into three and four. Besides, the Swedes in Finland are not real Swedes at all. What they are, is not quite clear. Some historians maintain that they are descendants of Germans, Balts, and Scots who, centuries ago, when settling in Finland, preferred the more elegant and cultured Swedish tongue to Finnish, then the language of peasants only. Others say that the Swedes are pure Finns who picked up Swedish for the same reason. There is also a school which asserts—rightly or wrongly—that these Swedes are Swedes. They are said to have come from Sweden about 800 years ago and settled on the dangerous, robber-infested shores of Finland—where no one else dared to settle—and have stayed there ever since and, to a certain extent, kept their own language. Only to a certain extent. From the Finnish standpoint theirs is, of course, a strange language; but so is it from the Swedish, too. In the last eight centuries they have picked up a Finnish intonation. The Swedo-Finns maintain that their language alone is proper Swedish while the whole of Sweden speaks a ridiculous patois. At the same time they refuse to be called Swedes because they look down upon the Swedes who did not fight for their independence. (And never settled on the dangerous shores of Finland.) They call themselves *Finlanders* which means "inhabitants of Finland." They also call the Finns Finlanders because they, too, are inhabitants of Finland. Whenever the Finns won a gold medal at the Helsinki Olympic Games, the local Swedish papers announced "another success for Finlanders." This annoyed the Finns beyond measure because, while not denying that they are inhabitants of Finland, they say that they are not Finlanders but Finns.

However un-Swedish these Swedo-Finns may be, their language was Swedish enough to create a serious linguistic problem in the country which was, ultimately, solved by the common sense and admirable patience of the Finns. (Finns proper I mean, not Finlanders.) The Swedish speaking population of Finland is estimated at only 8·6 per cent of the total population, yet both Finnish and Swedish are official languages of Finland. This is the more remarkable because all the Swedish-speaking population lives either on the south-west coast or in Helsinki. The situation was, however,

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not always quite so favourable to the Finns. Swedish used to be the only language of the educated classes and, in fact, so-called better-class Finns did a great deal to preserve the hegemony of Swedish. Bitter linguistic struggles broke out in the last century and were mainly fought out in the universities and schools but, naturally, also in Parliament. Finnish gradually gained ground but the Finns had to fight hard for the recognition of their own tongue in their own country. Today, in every district, either Finnish or Swedish is the recognised main language, or both. At the law-courts, in all districts, everyone is permitted to speak his own language. In Helsinki all street-signs and official announcements are bi-lingual and in Helsinki University there are twenty-two Swedish-speaking professors out of a total of one hundred. When war came, the linguistic controversy stopped. During the war the Swedo-Finns proved to be just as ardent patriots as the Finno-Finns and that settled the linguistic problem as far as the latter were concerned. After the war, it was the Swedes who asked for small concessions, which they were granted. Once they proved their patriotism (never really in doubt) the Finns ceased to care. "We don't want to compel anyone to speak any particular language," they say now, with a shrug of their shoulders.

But if you go to the Finnish Radio Head-quarters and listen to transmissions, you notice a curious thing. The announcer makes his announcements—sometimes a very long announcement—in Finnish, then he pulls a large switch and makes another equally long announcement in Swedish. The idea is that the overwhelming majority of Finns—all over the country, with the exception of the south-western corner—should not be obliged to listen to a language they may never have heard. "But what about the pause?" I asked. "The transmission is not exactly snappy for the Finns." "Oh,"—was the reply—"you don't know the Finnish temperament. They don't even notice any pause if it is less than half an hour." Another proof of the Finns' endearing patience and tolerance is that one of their chief announcers is a Dane who speaks both Finnish and Swedish with a slight foreign accent. "Don't they mind it?" I asked him. "In a radio-announcer, of all people?" "No," he answered, "they know that I'm a Dane and they say: 'You can't expect a Dane to speak such good Finnish as we do.'"

*George Mikes*

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# *Comment*

## Notes on the Indian Writer Today

A WELL-KNOWN Marathi playwright tells of a literary conference to which he had, by some mischance, been invited. A visiting English critic who attended the conference was curious about the Indian stage and he was asking numerous questions. Quite a number of the literary élite present took it upon themselves to enlighten him on the renaissance in Indian drama; they talked enthusiastically of performances of Shakespeare and Sheridan and Shaw, and of moderns like Cocteau, Sartre, and Anouilh. The English critic listened patiently for a while and then asked them whether there were no Indian dramatists. No; his informants were not aware of any; they had not even heard of the vital experiments that were being conducted by Marathi and Gujarathi dramatists just round the corner; that stage belonged to a different world; they felt superior to it. "And it was called an Indian literary conference!" concluded the Marathi playwright.

This state of affairs was much more common in the last decade, when the writers of English in India seemed to think that they were the only writers that needed to be taken into account. Most of them still tend to think so. But currently, the Indian writers of English do not fit well into the Indian literary scene; they have been forced to seek a new orientation and, till they achieve it, the Indo-Anglians will belong neither here nor there—neither in India nor in England completely. By reason of political hullabaloo, the writers of Hindi seem to be inheriting their mantle.

WESTERNERS, and such of the Indians as are Western by training, tend to make much of the problem of the Indian languages. True, there are many of them. But the Indian writer does not really have much choice; he can write in English (that is, if he knows it sufficiently well) or in his mother tongue. It is very rare that a writer cultivates a tongue other than these two, though theoretically it could happen, say, in the case of an Indian Conrad or Koestler. A non-Hindi speaking writer is not likely to elect to *write* in Hindi (though he may at some point translate his work into it), for all the other languages of India have a deeper and often more satisfactory literary tradition.

To write in English or his mother tongue—that is the problem which most Indian writers face at the outset. To write in English is to have a wider and a larger audience; it is also sounder economically, for an author can, some time or other, hope to reach the fabulous American and English markets. All these considerations notwithstanding, more and more writers of the present generation have chosen to write in their own mother tongue. The serious writer feels that he can be sincere, genuine, authentic only in his language. (I for one would think that the work of the Indo-Anglians confirms this point of view.) However much he might have mastered it, English is, to use an Indian-English term, only a stepmother tongue.

THE corollary to the language question is the provincialism and the insularity that most language writers tend to develop. There is as yet no machinery, state-sponsored or private, by which literary material can be exchanged between the languages of India. A great writer in Kannada or Marathi is not recognised as a writer at all outside his own language area. (Only the "Progressive" groups and the "Peace Committees" offer an all-India platform



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for the language writers.) All serious writers are agreed that this is a problem which has to be tackled immediately.

A WRITER'S attitude to tradition can help him to a certain extent in raising him out of his provincialism—for if India has many languages, they have all been influenced by similar traditions. But tradition is still an unsolved problem for most Indian writers today. Time was, a few decades ago, when the writer felt that he should definitely break away from all of the Indian past. Now he is not so sure. He is increasingly aware of the fact that he is born heir both to the literary heritage of the West *and* to the no less glorious heritage of the Indian past. A synthesis has not been achieved, and till it is, tradition can pull both ways. Whatever is written in India today is cast in Western moulds, but does not measure completely true by Western standards.

THE best-developed European attitude of recent times is the intellectual attitude to life and art, to which the Indian does not take kindly. The intellectual in Europe strikes superior attitudes that remind the Indians of the so-called higher castes of India. The average Indian feels that the intellectual in Europe has been at the bottom of most of the mischief—consciously or not—most of the political, artistic, and moral mischief that we are witnessing in Europe today. The Indian intellectual is a highly Westernised, purely political, academic creature who is at home in no Indian setting. The serious writer does not call himself an intellectual; he would be offended were he called one.

THE bulk of Indian writing of the last few generations has been mainly a literature of social protest. In Hindi, Urdu, and a few other languages, the tendency still persists to castigate society, to hold social evils up as villains, and to argue against existing social institutions, almost to the exclusion of anything else. To trace back all evils to the primary cause of a caste-ridden outmoded social system was easy. The material lent itself docilely to emotional and artistic portrayal. The great writers of modern India have all been ardent social reformers; the new literatures began in most of the languages as a vehicle for social reform.

Recently, in the past decade or two, the attitude of social protest has been changing imperceptibly. Many a writer has suddenly realised that to replace this society with, say, a modernised Western society, may be only to exchange one set of evils for another; this has been the theme which many a serious writer has handled with sincerity in these last few years.

The Indian writer is now attacking more fundamental and basic problems, problems of a human and spiritual nature. (It is exactly these values which to my mind are wanting in the bulk of Indo-Anglian literature.) This writing often centres about the family, that ultimate unit round which most other values are crumbling today in India; such novels and stories have been written in Tamil, in Bengali, in Marathi, in Kannada, and in the other languages; they bid fair to be the peaks of modern Indian writing.

A LACK of critical training and perception in the reading public is a characteristic of the Indian literary scene today and handicaps the serious writer in many ways. A political reputation often prepares the ground for a literary reputation that can by no standards be justified. This is not a uniquely Indian problem, of course; but it is seen in a more exaggerated form here. Serious writers, in the course of a decade of writing, often find themselves without even the necessary minimum of recognition that will satisfy an author's small vanity, and without resources of any sort. They tend little by little to develop into journalists, often capable, sometimes well-paid, mostly self-satisfied, and invariably trying to lay down the law for others. Many who had set out to scale Everest in the Himalayas have stopped quite satisfied at Delhi in the plains. The Indian writers who have continued to be writers till the last day of their lives can be counted on one's fingers. Still, they do exist, and in no lesser proportion than in the West. And, in contrast to the West, the situation is new, confused, bustling, and therefore comparatively hopeful—or so one would like to think.

*S. Rajee*

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# *Communications*

## AT THE VILLA NELLE

SIR—

The young have taken Empson for a master.[1]
Yeats Eliot had. And Auden smacked.[2] A thing
One cannot but regard as a disaster.

E.g. the fraught laconic. Fester faster[3]
Said the White Queen[4] to the (dead) Fisher King.[5]
The young have taken Empson for a master

So that is what. What have you. Silly bastard
It's near enough. And shows. You've read Lit. Eng.[6]
One cannot but regard as a disaster

This inkhorn[7] marriage by a paper pastor
Of bee and flower. No pollen and no sting.
The young have taken Empson for a master

And they are for the dark.[8] See Zoroaster.[9]
But I beleavis Jesus give me swing.[10]
One cannot but regard as a disaster

This putting on of a french mustard plaster
On a cold cock to split on the sun rising.[11]
That the young have taken Empson for a master
One cannot but regard as a disaster.

[1] *See contemporary Oxford poetry* passim.
[2] *See Empson.*
[3] *See Carroll, Waugh.*
[4] *See Carroll, Graves.*
[5] *See Sir James Fraser.*
[6] *See Rettop*
[7] *See above.*
[8] *See Shakespeare.*
[9] *See Eliot who saw Shelley.*
[10] *See G———e B———r (unwritten).*
[11] *See Donne.*

PATRIC DICKENSON

*Rye, Sussex*

## MIKES ON SCANDINAVIA

SIR—In the first of his amusing "Letters from Scandinavia," Mr. Mikes is, or so it seems to me, twice wrong in speaking of four Scandinavian states. If "in addition to Norway and Sweden, Denmark always is counted as a real, and Finland as an honorary Scandinavian country"—then what of Iceland? From 930 to 1262 a free republic, Iceland, after an interlude of nearly seven centuries in dependence, first on Norway and thereafter Denmark, in 1944 again won sovereign republican status. If not an outright "Scandinavian" state, it surely should not be forgotten as a member of this brotherhood. Mr. Mikes would be most welcome also in this Northern country whenever he might feel inclined to explore our remote Ultima Thule, and ascertain that mathematically puzzling fact, that if there are four Scandinavian states, there are also five.

GUNNAR GUNNARSSON

*Reykjavik, Iceland*

SIR—After having read the most exquisite article on Sweden, and Swedes in particular, by a Mr. George Mikes I must admit that in the end I was not quite sure which of the two is really half asleep, Mr. George Mikes or little America.

I would like to suggest to Mr. Mikes that before he uses so casually the description Little America he should familiarise himself with Big America and find out what is left, once he succeeded in removing New York.

If he should happen to be wide awake (?) he might discover that there is a great deal left including such sparkling and charming towns like San Francisco and roughly 150,000,000 people.

C. ENDER

*London, S.W.7*

SIR—Mr. George Mikes praises the Swedes for their common sense (in your April issue), but has not himself enough of it to wonder why the majority of them own "little huts in faraway valleys" if they "do not escape, as a rule" to them. The fact is that, directly the schools close, Swedish wives and children do escape to those huts, returning to town only when schools open; and if they do spend 6·8 per cent of their income on foreign travel, might it not have dawned on Mr. Mikes that such travel, for which no passport or foreign language is needed, takes them mostly to other Scandinavian countries in all of which Swedish is perfectly understood.



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When Mr. Mikes asserts that the Swedes "have no cafés" I am reminded of an English writer who, a few years ago, asserted that "Sweden is the dirtiest country in Europe": the fact being that, in most Swedish provincial towns, a half-dozen cafés are to be found in any main street.

It is rather odd to find such uninformed assertions in a publication such as yours, but I am glad to see that Mr. Mikes has not repeated, in his article on Sweden, the thumping untruth about Swedish war rations which adorned his article on Norway.

BÖRJE P. LAW

*London, W.11*

SIR—Mr. Mikes is surely a little unreasonable if he expects Scandinavian history to have left no trace on Swedish character. The kings of Sweden, as everybody knows, were for long periods overlords of both Norway and Finland. Sweden's king of today, Gustaf VI Adolf, was in his youth not only Crown Prince of Sweden but also of Norway. To find a Norwegian, who was also a king of Sweden, one might have to go back to somewhere about 1319 (after King Haakon V died).

The union between Norway and Sweden, entered into in 1814, ended in 1905. I think that, instead of expecting the unreasonable, which Mr. Mikes seems to do, we should be thankful that Sweden and Norway settled their differences without going to war. The remarks of Mr. Mikes, however, hardly make for good feeling. Though he calls Sweden "Little America," he forgets that, as late as 1950, only one in every thirty-four Swedes owned a motor-car.

MARINA-LINNEA HOARE

*Broxted, Essex*

## MUSIC FESTIVAL IN ROME

SIR—

"*La musique, envisagée dans sa partie spéculative, est, comme la définissaient les anciens, la connaissance de l'ordre de toutes choses, la science des rapports harmoniques de l'univers; elle repose sur des principes immuables auxquels rien ne peut porter atteinte.*"

Fabre d'Olivet.

The new music played in the recent Rome Congress of Contemporary Music, reported on by Mr. Glock in your June issue, brought sharply into focus the question of the ultimate value of the dodecaphonic technique. All the works submitted for the prize, either by concession to a facet of modernity, or by sincere belief in this new technique, were influenced in varied degrees by it (and it is interesting to note in this connection that the prize-winning work which had a unanimous vote was the one in which the dodecaphonic influence, although stated, was least apparent). One could thus watch with intense interest how this "stile nuovo" would be illuminated by the impact of varied personalities, what gloss the original texts would receive when passed through other minds. Let it be said at once that, for me, the illumination was but faint, and the glosses of no profound significance. This may be because no great creative minds were at work, but I am inclined to believe that the reason is in the very nature of the system itself which by doing away with a natural hierarchy and, on the surface, *expanding* possibilities, does in fact, contract and narrow them. It is one of the paradoxes of all art that to accept possibilities beyond a certain point is to invite disintegration, and it seemed to me that disintegration, musical and spiritual, had set in in many works heard in the Rome Congress. When a composer cuts himself away from the world of "natural law" by subscribing to arbitrary and private techniques that do away with all the necessary focal points that bind and give an inner musical logic to the succession of sounds, communication gives way to private soliloquy. To eavesdrop upon these soliloquies might, and possibly could be, of interest were they more concerned with vital and life-giving things, but unmistakable and unrelieved misanthropy seemed to be their leading characteristic. And this is the negation of that heightening of the conscious that true art gives. I don't believe it is a matter of "getting used" to the idiom: that in itself would prove nothing, as the human mind seems capable of "getting used" to the most atrocious things. What revealed itself at this Congress was that techniques and idioms were being shifted from the periphery of music to occupy central points, *as though they had a value in themselves*. An idiom is only valuable in so far as it is the direct outcome of the sweat and toil of the composer's creative thought: it isn't something to be adopted for its own sake: nor is music to be judged for its conformity or nonconformity to a system. Aural argument and logic can always be sensed by the musician at a first hearing, even if he fails at once to take in all the finer points—but paper logic is a dead mental exercise leading only to sterility. And it was this paper logic working in a system that defies natural order that gave, for me, such a strong impression of creative decay. Real and lasting values no longer existed.

EDMUND RUBBRA

*London*

## THE POVERTY OF NATIONS

SIR—May we be allowed to make a few remarks about Professor Clark's article on "The Poverty

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of Nations," published in your issue of March 1954?

Commenting upon his table which gives, in what he calls Oriental Units, the standard of living in all countries of the world, Professor Clark writes: "Ever since 1914, progress has been disappointingly slow in the countries of Eastern Europe: Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Rumania." Calling Rumania and Albania "the bad boys of Europe," he puts them at the bottom of the European section of his table, adding this comment: "Albanians are sometimes inclined to boast that their country has never been anything but tribal and barbarous, even when it was nominally part of the Turkish empire, and Rumania seems to be a country which is steadily descending in the economic scale and may soon end up in the same condition."

(1) It would be interesting to know who those Albanians are who take pride in describing their country in such disparaging terms. The Albanians we know readily admit that their country is poor and backward, and that there are remnants of the tribal system in the mountainous north. This they attribute to the fact that their country for five centuries was under Turkish rule, while Professor Clark seems to imply that this was their millennium.

In twenty-seven years of independence, the Albanians succeeded in building a state out of what had been a province of a crumbling empire. They provided themselves with a centralised administration based on Western standards. In particular, their gendarmerie was organised by highly qualified British officers. The rule of law prevailed throughout the country, including the mountain districts of the north. . . . It is true to add that the Albanians were not granted enough time to organise a comprehensive statistical service. This makes it difficult to work out even an approximate figure of pre-war national income, the more so as the main producers were individual farmers and small craftsmen. How Professor Clark has been able to overcome this difficulty is a mystery to us. But one essential figure is available and that is the output of grain. In 1937, it reached a total of 200,000 tons. For a population of nearly one million this was more or less enough to secure their daily bread. In fact, nobody died from hunger while Albania was independent; but now that the Communists are in power, famine and starvation are a normal occurrence.

During their independence the Albanians managed to improve the balance of trade. This foreign trade was carried out almost exclusively with the countries of the West, and Italy in particular. Only a small percentage was covered by the countries of Central Europe and none at all by Soviet Russia. Now the situation is reversed. All Albania's trade is done with Russia and her satellites. Russia takes not only the country's mineral resources such as oil, chromium, and copper, but also foodstuffs such as olive oil, cheese, etc., which are in very short supply. The terms of trade are disastrously in Albania's disfavour and represent colonial exploitation of the worst type.

(2) The case between Rumania and Professor Clark is a more involved one. It has been asserted by some Rumanian and foreign economists that his treatment of that particular country was inadequate in the past. It is worth reassessing it now when, in his sweeping new generalisation, he seems to be doubly unjust to a people who cannot defend themselves.

The conclusion drawn by Professor Clark in his *Conditions of Economic Progress* (1940), that the income per head of the working population in Rumania represented a drop of 298 "International Units" from the 1913 level, was criticised on the following three accounts: (a) the statistics upon which his calculation was founded were heterogeneous, incomplete, and confused; (b) the results of the calculation were not endorsed by general statistics (in absolute figures on percentages) of European and Rumanian sources; (c) the years selected for the calculation, 1924–1935, were the worst for the agrarian countries of Eastern Europe, because of the world depression which affected them more than others.

As for the inadequacy of the general conclusion about Rumania's economic situation, this is what the American writer, Mr. Henry L. Roberts, the author of the latest comprehensive study on Rumania to be published in the West (*Rumania: Problems of an Agrarian State*, Yale University Press, 1951) has to say about it: "The method used to reach this conclusion was by necessity complicated. The pre-1914 national income estimate for the old Kingdom was taken from the Dresdner Bank figures; estimates for Bukovina and Transylvania were taken from studies on Austria-Hungary by Weizner and Fellner. The figures for Bessarabia were established arbitrarily. In addition to the task of combining these three estimates it was necessary to take into account the enormous depreciation of the LEU from its pre-1914 level and the change in the level of prices. Given the ultimate uncertainty of Rumanian statistics, it seems impossible to judge the probable accuracy of Mr. Clark's estimate."

As for the fact that his conclusions were not endorsed by any other statistical assessment, we should like to quote only the following three examples. In the Index of Manufacturing Production in certain



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European countries, based on the data developed by the Economic, Financial, and Transit Department of the League of Nations, the index of manufacturing production in Rumania in 1936–38 (1913=100) is given as 156, as compared with France: 118·4, Hungary: 124·4, Poland: 93·2. In the Statistical Handbook of the League of Nations the following absolute figures are published as compared with 1925–29:

*Millions of quintals*

| | *1925–29* | *1937–38* |
|---|---|---|
| Wheat . . . | 28,721 | 37,601 |
| Maize . . . | 45,349 | 47,519 |

If, finally, we look at the figures for consumption, the Rumanian economist, V. Madgearu, pointed out that between 1913 and 1927, the annual per capita consumption in kilograms rose steadily in sugar, cotton goods, paper, and soap, and all statistics confirm that, between 1927 and 1939, they continued to rise.

Generally speaking, it is incontestable that in the twenty years of national independence which Rumania enjoyed between 1919 and 1939, there was definite and steady progress, even if it was "disappointingly slow."

But with this we come to the second point, in which we consider Professor Clark's attitude towards Rumania to be doubly unjust. In his new calculation, based on the change from his previous International Units to the present Oriental Units, Professor Clark takes it to be a country "which is steadily descending the economic scale." This ambiguous statement gives the impression that it is backed by new and relevant statistical findings; and that the political situation in Rumania being identical with what it was, the subsequent deterioration was due to the incapacity of the people.

Now this is misleading on two counts.

First of all, we believe Professor Clark could not obtain any reliable statistics about economic conditions in Rumania since 1946. The Rumanian Communist Government has hardly released any statistics at all and those which it did release are merely fantastic percentages on irrelevant indices.

But the Communists have their reasons for not producing detailed statistics. The fact is that since the entry of the country into the Soviet orbit, the economic level of Rumania has sunk disastrously, as has that of all the countries of Eastern Europe. The national resources of Rumania and its national income are ruthlessly drained by the disadvantageous and compulsory exchange rate of the rouble; by the Soviet monopoly of foreign trade; by the fact that coal, oil, timber, shipping, and practically all main branches of production are exploited by the mixed Soviet Rumanian companies which benefit from dividend-incomes in a nationalised industry and from a virtual exterritoriality; by the disorganisation provoked by the local Communists themselves; and, of course, also by the reluctance of workers, industrial and agrarian alike, to aid in the exploitation of their country. The size of the disaster is revealed only in moments of crises and purges in the Communist ranks. In March 1952, the trio Anna Pauker, Luca, Georgescu were accused of having brought the country to the verge of bankruptcy. In August 1953, the present prime minister himself recognised that agricultural production had fallen below the pre-war level.

(3) It is difficult to see why Professor Clark does not mention the effect of Russian exploitation upon the economies of the countries of Eastern Europe and merely says that "total productivity per head in these countries now is at or below the level of 1913." In fact total productivity in Czechoslovakia was much higher between 1919–39 than before 1913; and it is much lower today. Of which of these periods does Professor Clark write? Would this not be a circumstance striking enough to be mentioned even in the macrocosmic calculations of philosophic economies?

This omission is the more inexplicable as Professor Clark was the first economist before the war to make a critical study of Soviet statistics and to show that the advent of Communism in the country has brought a lowering of the standard of living in 1935 as compared with 1913. (*Critique of Soviet Statistics*, p. 61.) Would Professor Clark consider a calculation to be serious which drew conclusions about the standard of living in France, Norway, or Belgium between 1940 and 1944, but which omitted to mention that during those years they were occupied by a foreign army and subjected to a foreign power?

Not only on behalf of our peoples, who should not be judged on the achievements of their present governments, but also as students who enjoyed reading Professor Clark's earlier works, we hope that he will be able to clarify this obscure point in his new theory.

GHITA IONESCU

*London* T. ZAVALANI

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# BOOKS

## The Literary Climate in France

In most discussions of the French novel, it is customary to begin with at least a formal obeisance to the classical virtues—precision, clarity, elegance—and then to observe how they were challenged or confirmed by the successive movements of the last century: Romanticism and Naturalism, Parnassians and Symbolists. But the English reader today—who probably approaches the French novel with as much sympathy as ever in the past—rapidly discovers these neat text-book categories offer him little help. Too many things have happened in a very short time, and he soon notices an essential and disconcerting strangeness. It is rather as if he had wandered into some vast open-air theatre in which an endless Passion Play is being enacted. At first everything *looks* solid and ordinary enough—the houses, the village street, the shrubbery—all very like their dusty, unassuming English counterparts. But then some trick of the light occurs, and unreality creeps in: shrill voices are raised in altercation behind the bushes, men trail across the foreground carrying props, while from shallow trenches in the ground *régisseurs* and *metteurs-en-scène* can be seen making frantic signals to one another.

Perhaps all this is only another way of saying that writers are taken a great deal more seriously in France than in this country. In the columns of French literary reviews they are constantly invited to state their opinions on every subject under the sun, and usually do so with evident relish. They also tend to found political parties, organise committees, and enter parliament far more frequently than they do here. All of which means that in order to understand the literary climate in France today, we have to begin, not with traditional schools and disciplines but with particular events and the intellectual conflicts arising out of them.

Among these events, the war and the German Occupation still loom by far the largest. It has, of course, been said that no outsider can hope to grasp what the Occupation meant to those who suffered it in the flesh: but here a distinction ought to be drawn. We have surely been made sufficiently familiar with its purely physical horrors—the concentration camps and mass deportations, the manhunts, the shootings of hostages, the narrowing circles of cold and hunger. But the Occupation caused a more intimate injury, and it is this that is, perhaps, more difficult to grasp. To a people imbued with the spirit of Cartesian rationalism, it was the Nazi enthronement of blind unreason which was the more subtle and unforgivable affront.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the immediate post-war period saw the rise of what has been called "a literature of extreme situations," and which was essentially a literature of revolt and protest: protest not only against the obvious barbarities of the Nazi régime, but also against the mediocrity, the cowardice and compromise in France itself which had paved the way for defeat in 1940. It is in this light that the astonishing success of a difficult and esoteric philosophy like Existentialism—which Sartre himself described as being addressed primarily to other philosophers—becomes comprehensible: it imposed itself not so much by force of logical argument as by crystallising a widespread moral hunger. Probably not one



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in twenty of those who overnight proclaimed themselves its followers had studied the tortuous refinements of *L'Être et le Néant*: but at least the main implications of the doctrine were clear. To the Nazi concept of cruel élites, it opposed the universality of the human condition; to the Nazi insistence on total submission to the State, it opposed the supremacy of individual moral choice. Man, it proclaimed, is free: but his freedom is a burden to be assumed rather than a gift bestowed from above. He can attain it only by "choosing himself." But, in so doing, he projects an image of humanity in accordance with his choice: his actions therefore involve him in a total responsibility, and cannot but be made in anguish. Yet he cannot by any means evade either the choice or the responsibility it entails: and to seek to evade it, or to mask from himself the full burden of his responsibility, lays him open to the charge of dishonesty—*mauvaise foi*.

It was in this austere form—founded, however, according to Sartre, not on despair but on *une dureté optimiste*—that Existentialism signed its repudiation of the past. But many of the Existentialist arguments were no more than transpositions of attitudes already adopted by other writers, both before and during the war. Malraux, for example, had already proclaimed that "a man is the sum of his actions," and had shown his lonely heroes grappling with overwhelming responsibilities. From widely opposed positions, Aragon and Bernanos had both stigmatised the *mauvaise foi* of ordinary middle-class society, the insincerity and mediocrity that ended by stifling the moral conscience. In other words, the post-war mood of protest and revolt was certainly not confined to any one movement. One French critic, R.-M. Albérès, set out to prove that it provided a common link between six writers as dissimilar otherwise as Sartre, Camus, Bernanos, Malraux, Aragon, and Anouilh: and not only their protest, but their effort to furnish a response, to elaborate, under different names, a new ethos. What they have in common is a desperate attempt to bring about a change of heart. Thus, it is not difficult to connect this mood with such a phenomenon as the post-war Catholic movement of *prêtres-ouvriers*.

Meanwhile, another result of the Occupation, and the Liberation which followed, was to lay France open more than ever before to outside influences. In the immediate post-war period American influence gained a particular ascendancy, although it has perhaps now begun to wane. It was an influence that exerted itself in the choice of both subject-matter and style, and most of all by importing a new and brutal directness of expression which seemed particularly well fitted to convey the harsh, topsy-turvy realities of the post-war situation. The novelist and critic, Michel Zeraffa, has precisely described its impact:

> The Americans shattered our concept of the novel. For the first time, characters were brutally imposed upon us like unexpected actors. . . . We had the impression that a fist had been thrust through a canvas adorned with the myriad branches of a long tradition. As we read Dos Passos or Faulkner we were a little like Roquentin in *La Nausée* or the heroine of *L'Invitée* when they notice that objects come into existence, that a pane of glass between them and things has been broken.

Another influence—even more direct, yet also more subtle and difficult to summarise—arose out of the physical presence of German troops on French soil. For generations the two nations had confronted each other with hostility and suspicion across the Rhine: yet behind their antagonism lay a half-fearful attraction. One remembers the grudging admiration with which, in Mérimée and Maupassant, the French look upon the German *reîtres*; and the German nostalgia for French *douceur de vivre* summed up in a popular tag like *Glücklich wie Gott im Frankreich*. Then, for four years, the two countries were locked in a deathly embrace. It was a relationship in which hatred and disgust certainly held the upper hand: but it would be wilful to ignore the element of complicity which also came into being between hunter and hunted—of that tormented complicity to which the strange genius of Dostoevsky was perhaps the first to open our eyes. Within its narrow compass, Vercor's *Le Silence de la mer* still presents the classical instance of this deeply equivocal mingling of repulsion and attraction: yet one finds it hinted at even in a work like David Rousset's *L'Univers concentrationnaire*, which deals with the pure nightmare of the Nazi death camps.

These influences, together with the post-war philosophies of protest and revolt, have tended

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to take the contemporary French novel very far from the classical virtues of precision, clarity, a sense of proportion. There are, of course, exceptions. Camus is one, if only for that remarkable sobriety and directness of style which the French call *dépouillement* (Sartre himself has pointed out that *L'Étranger* is not only a novel of the Absurd, but stems from the direct tradition of Voltaire and the 18th century moralists). Or one could point to the more surprising example of Jean Giono, notable in the past for his turbulent evocations of French peasant life, who in his most recent novels adopts a spare, incisive style which might almost be that of Diderot. But these examples are scarcely typical.

On balance, it may well prove that outside influences have been beneficial rather than otherwise, both in revealing new sources of material and in leading to a greater suppleness and variety in methods of narration. But they have not always been happily assimilated: on the contrary, they have sometimes led to excesses, to verbal inflation, to an arbitrary confusion of narrative, and to a mechanical exploitation of themes falsely assumed to be peculiar to our time. The work of a novelist like Marguerite Duras offers a case in point. In *Un barrage contre le Pacifique*, she produced a vivid picture of poor French *colons* in Indo-China, remarkable alike for its restrained compassion and the concrete detail with which a strange, brilliant countryside is evoked. Yet in a more recent novel, *Le Marin de Gibraltar*, she seems to have succumbed to the worst of American influences. This story of a rich woman who has only once known full sexual satisfaction with a certain sailor from Gibraltar, and who thereafter sails her private yacht round the world in quest of him, is presumably intended as a tragic parable for the frustration of our age. In fact, in its endless stream of ultra-laconic and pointless dialogue, it merely reads like a feverish parody of Hemingway.

Nor have all the variations on the ambiguous Franco-German dialogue proved particularly fortunate. If *Le Marin de Gibraltar* is mock-Hemingway, a recent novel by Jean Cordelier called *Les yeux de la tête* might not unjustly be described as mock-D. H. Lawrence. In spite of some excellent descriptive passages, notably of the effects of "saturation" bombing raids on German cities, this vast novel of several

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hundred pages is in essence little more than the account of a French army doctor's sexual odyssey through wartime Germany. To be fair, Cordelier succeeds very well in conveying his hero's sense of isolation and loneliness, and the mingled pity and rage with which he embarks on the seduction of a series of middle-aged German women. But when each of these seductions is described with the same wealth of minute detail, the final result is inevitably boring and unpalatable—a vast blood-pudding, sweating lust and *Schadenfreude*.

It may be objected that I have unfairly singled out two bad novels at the expense of a great many other far less pretentious ones that could be praised instead. But the whole point of this demonstration has been to try to convey some of the violent and troubled currents that have been flowing through French literature since the war, and which the English reader, even the least hampered by *a priori* notions of what the French novel stands for, may well find perplexing and disconcerting. Clearly, both philosophical theories and outside influences have played some part in engendering a note of feverish perversity and excess. And if, for convenience, one describes this process as "un-French," that does not mean that one is itching to fire the starting gun for a witch-hunt.

In any case, these excesses have not gone unremarked or uncriticised inside France. In general, they have developed out of a morbid exaltation of individual sensibility—a degenerate version of the Romantic revolt against order and authority. Not long after the early exhilaration of the Liberation had died down, it became clear that some sort of recall to the classical values of measure and proportion was inevitable. Rather surprisingly, one of its earliest manifestations came from the popular novelist, Marcel Aymé. In 1949, Aymé published an extremely witty essay called *Le confort intellectuel*, which turned out to be a spirited defence both of good sense and of the heavily maligned bourgeoisie. *Le confort intellectuel* takes the form of a Socratic dialogue between a distinctly *avant-garde* narrator and a certain self-proclaimed bourgeois, M. Lepage. At first the narrator seems assured of an easy triumph: M. Lepage appears to be simply an obtuse and cantankerous old reactionary, whose foible it is to attribute all the evils of the day to an exaggerated cult of Baudelaire. But gradually M. Lepage brings up his heavy batteries, and reveals that the target for his attack is not merely Baudelaire but the whole Romantic tradition. Romanticism, he proclaims, has led to such an extraordinary inflation of language, and hence to such an inextricable confusion of ideas, that people are no longer able to distinguish between one thing and its opposite. The frantic search for singularity has piled the beautiful and the ugly, the chaotic, the bizarre, and the monstrous all in one heap. Romanticism claims to enhance the individual sensibility: yet, confronted with a new book, a new picture, or even a singularly revolting crime, people fall back on the same few parrot-cries—"divine," "fantastic," "unheard-of." As a result, swept along on the flood of permanent revolution, the ordinary self-respecting middle-class citizen gradually loses all sense of orientation. Even Communism is no longer an immediate reality but a literary climate, spiced with terms like "proletariat," "masses," "dictatorship of the people."

Nor does M. Lepage omit from his indictment the cult of personal aberration—that is, the notion that if a writer flaunts a particular sexual deviation flamboyantly and persistently enough, he must *ipso facto* be a genius. This final charge, however, is too much for the outraged narrator: and the essay concludes on a captivating note of irony—

> Je me frappai le bas du ventre comme c'est l'usage à présent chez les écrivains qui se flattent d'avoir un fort tempérament artistique.
>
> — J'ai quelque chose là, ajoutai-je.
>
> — Il vaudrait mieux pour vous et vos pareils d'avoir quelque chose dans la tête, répliqua M. Lepage. Mais, sans le savoir, vous avez très bien montré le chemin parcouru par le romantisme en cent cinquante ans. Au début du siècle passé, les romantiques se frappaient le cœur où ils voyaient le siège du génie. Maintenant, ils se frappent les parties. On se demande jusqu'où et à quelle bassesse descendra le génie.
>
> Il n'en dit pas plus et je dus prendre congé. Le geste de me frapper le bas-ventre, geste hautement significatif qui me vaut ordinairement tant d'estime chez la comtesse Piédange et dans beaucoup d'autres bonnes maisons, avait choqué ce bourgeois cul et poussiéreux.

Aymé was not, of course, alone in raising a protest against that literary *foire sur la place* from which, in an earlier generation, Rolland's Jean-Christophe escaped with such alacrity:

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but there is space here to mention only one further example. It was marked by the appearance, in January 1951, of the review *Roman*, published from the little walled town of Saint Paul de Vence, in the south of France. *Roman* was founded by two gifted novelists, Pierre de Lescure and Célia Bertin: *Roman* holds a particular interest for English readers in that it has drawn inspiration largely from writers like Chekhov and Virginia Woolf—writers who capture the inconsequence, the flashing moment, the moody day-dreams of the inner self, and thus stand in contrast to the typical French novel with its highly organised intellectual structure. In the past three years, *Roman* has also published translations of a number of living English writers, including Ivy Compton-Burnett, William Sansom, and Henry Green, and critical studies of their work: and the French publishers Plon have now started to bring out, under the imprint of *Roman*, a series of novels by young French writers which promise to show that these influences have been fruitfully assimilated.

It would be manifestly absurd to suggest that all French novelists can be divided into sheep and goats—"uncommitted" and "committed." In spite of all that I have said of the high degree of organisation in intellectual life in France, it is almost certainly demonstrable that a majority of today's most talented novelists—Louis Guilloux, Pierre Brisson, Pierre Gascar, Béatrix Beck, Marguerite Yourcenar, to name only a few—owe allegiance to no particular school or movement. Nevertheless, the movements—large and many-faceted like Catholicism or Communism, or small, esoteric, and ephemeral—continue to exist, and it is scarcely possible to understand the literary climate in France today without recognising their powerful impulsions behind the scenes.

I began this survey with what may have appeared a rather far-fetched analogy in terms of the theatre. The analogy may well look less extravagant, however, if we reflect that, after all, this is a drama in which we are all involved. The only difference is that in France its successive acts are presented with sharpened, more intransigent contours, the actors speak in heightened tones of triumph or of tragedy, their gestures are more abrupt and incisive. By comparison, no doubt, the English adopt a subdued and passive stance, if at times their attention does not seem to wander altogether. But however we choose to play them, the roles are essentially the same: what happens in France today can scarcely leave us unmoved.

*Erik de Mauny*

## BEYOND THE PLEASURE PRINCIPLE

I HAVE sometimes thought it a strange fact about the English Utilitarians that, believing pleasure to be the only good, they were themselves so little addicted to it. In Jeremy Bentham one does, indeed, find a certain intellectual playfulness; his wit is often elephantine but he leaves the impression that he enjoyed writing his voluminous works. He was, however, a man who made disciples rather than friends. His life was colourless and sequestered. His sincere devotion to the common good came rather from intellectual conviction than from warmth of feeling. James Mill, the closest and most influential of his immediate disciples, is a respectable but cheerless figure. A man of principle, haunted by the memory of his needy Scottish childhood and his early struggles to make good, hard-working, combative, patriarchal, lacking in tenderness not least towards himself, he pursued the general happiness like a military objective. The general happiness: no one's in particular, least of all his own.

A weaker character than his father but much his intellectual superior, a less original and consistent thinker than Bentham but a far better writer, a richer personality than either, John Stuart Mill* was a utilitarian by inheritance. He believed in pleasure because he

* *The Life of John Stuart Mill.* By MICHAEL ST. JOHN PACKE. Secker and Warburg. 42s.

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had been taught erroneously that it was the only thing that anyone could desire, but it was not in fact supremely important to him. What he really valued was justice and liberty and truth. He would himself have said that he valued them as means to happiness. But neither his life nor his work leaves any doubt that he cared for them passionately in themselves.

Such a man can hardly fail to command respect, but in his extreme high-mindedness he may also repel affection. It is not extravagant to call Mill a "saint of rationalism." But there are many to whom "rationalism" is a chilly word; and saints are not always, perhaps not often, lovable. Mill's autobiography is a fascinating book. It fills one with admiration for his intellectual and moral qualities. But the person whom it portrays is not entirely sympathetic. There is something pharisaical about him for all his selflessness and modesty. One can see the point of Disraeli's saying when Mill first appeared in the House of Commons, "Ah, I see, the finishing governess."

It is perhaps the chief merit of Mr. Packe's admirable biography that he shows how superficial this verdict is; how far, indeed, Mill's own portrayal of himself comes short of doing justice to the warmth and complexity of his nature. If he often appeared cold and reserved, it was not that he lacked feeling but that he feared to yield to it. Conscientiously rational in his thinking, he was deeply moved by romantic poetry. No less efficient than his father in his office at the East India Company, he was endearingly incompetent in the practical affairs of daily life. He cared for people as well as for causes. He was a companionable, if not what Dr. Johnson would have called a clubable, man. His friends remained devoted to him. If for many years he shunned society it was because he mistrusted its response to his relationship with Mrs. Taylor, which had come to mean everything to him. It was only where he thought that she was slighted that he failed in sympathy or understanding. He cast out Roebuck from his friendship for warning him that the affair might do him harm. The cold cruelty which he displayed towards his family when he had finally married Mrs. Taylor was due to his thinking that they had not welcomed the marriage with sufficient ardour. The letters in which the quarrel was conducted make it clear that he behaved extremely badly. But the imaginary affront which he was so remorselessly punishing was an affront to his wife. It is possible that he acted at her instigation in this as in so much else.

NATURALLY Mr. Packe has much to say about Harriet Taylor. He succeeds in putting both her character and her relationship to Mill in a much clearer light than they have ever appeared before. He takes it as established that although they were passionately in love and constantly in one another's company, and although they did not, as Mill puts it, "consider the ordinances of society binding on a subject so entirely personal," their relation to each other, during the twenty years that passed before Mr. Taylor's death enabled them to marry, really was, as Mill claimed, "one of strong affection and confidential intimacy only." Mr. Packe maintains with some heat that Mill was not under-sexed, though here he seems to go beyond his evidence. We are, however, hardly in a position to say that he is wrong. A more profitable subject of discussion is the intellectual influence which Mrs. Taylor exerted over Mill. It was assumed by Mill's contemporaries, who could not see in Mrs. Taylor all that he did, that in his public acknowledgments to her he exaggerated the extent to which he was indebted to her for his ideas. But Mr. Packe makes it clear that this debt was in fact considerable. It was under her influence that Mill became a champion of women's rights and that he moved in the direction of socialism. Had she not died only seven years after their marriage she might have drawn him further from the *laisser-faire* doctrines of his youth. Her daughter, Helen Taylor, who took care of Mill during the remaining years of his life, had something of her mother's spirit: the letter in which she reproaches him for hedging, when publicly questioned on the subject of his agnosticism, is most impressive; but she could not inherit all her mother's influence over him. Harriet Taylor is not an entirely attractive character. She had rather too strong a sense of what was due to her; she managed her double life with Mill and Mr. Taylor a little too efficiently. But she had much in her favour: looks, intelligence, grace, and strength of will.

Mr. Packe shows sympathy for nearly all his leading characters: the one person to whom he is consistently hostile is Carlyle. And indeed Carlyle emerges from the story as a most un-

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amiable figure. Ambitious, spiteful, domineering, he is the brilliant apostle of darkness. His championship of Governor Eyre, whom Mill vainly attempted to bring to justice for his brutal misgovernment of Jamaica, is particularly repulsive. Yet even Carlyle has his moment. His reception of the news that Mill had accidentally destroyed the only manuscript of the first Volume of his French Revolution was magnificent. He seems genuinely to have had more pity for Mill than for himself.

It is only when it comes to the more technical aspects of Mill's philosophy that Mr. Packe's hand falters. His summary of the logic is hardly adequate, nor does he give a wholly satisfactory account of the moral theory of utilitarianism. He may have considered that these subjects had been well enough treated by others. He does better with the political theory, though I wish that he had said more about the essay on Liberty. Mill's defence of liberty is in some respects naïve. He underrated men's capacity for being deceived. But it remains the finest statement of the liberal faith. I only wish that its principles commanded more allegiance. Some years ago at a Congress for Cultural Freedom in Berlin I read a paper in which I drew on Mill's arguments in favour of intellectual and political tolerance. It was not a good paper and it was very ill-received. "*In unserer Zeit*," I was told, "*hilft nicht John Stuart Mill.*" I still think that this objection was profoundly mistaken. It is just in times like these that there is the greatest need for Mill's principles to be upheld.

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JONATHAN CAPE

Like Professor Hayek, who contributes a preface to the book, I believe that "Mr Packe has given us the definitive biography of Mill for which we have so long been waiting." I hope that it will be very widely read.

*A. J. Ayer*

## AMERICAN GHOSTS

THERE is surely no other national literature more self-divided than the American, none more incorrigibly Manichean and inwardly destructive. Its Great Tradition is populated not with the petrified and noble dead but with lacerated bodies that do not cease to groan and bleed: Hawthorne, Melville, Whitman, Twain, James, Dreiser, Hemingway, Faulkner. . . . It is at one and the same time a literature of innocence and of experience, haunted by both for never having come to terms with either. "There are terrible spirits, ghosts, in the air of America," remarked D. H. Lawrence, whose *Studies in Classic American Literature* went most deeply into this subject—for Lawrence was haunted too, and by the very same spirits; and he was therefore able to see that American writing was not a branch from the smooth English stem, but a new growth whose roots went down to the

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same underground as did those of the wild and tangled Russian thicket.

Robert Penn Warren's *Brother to Dragons* ★ is an epic poem that wrestles furiously with these American ghosts. In the process, it suffers itself to be possessed—there is no other way—and the verse on occasion gesticulates wildly and loses its footing. But it emerges with the honour of having fought a real battle, when it would have been easy (it happens all the time) to avoid the conflict altogether, or simply go through the sham motions.

The poem takes as its point of departure a grisly historic incident: the dismemberment and murder, in 1811, of a Negro slave by Lilburne Lewis, nephew of Thomas Jefferson. It is an incident that suits Mr. Warren's purpose admirably, for it contains in close juxtaposition the unnatural innocence of the *philosophe* and the unnatural evil wreaked by his blood. There is no record of Jefferson ever having made reference to the affair; which might mean that in his enlightened pride he ignored it, or that he was so affected as to make of it a secret. Mr. Warren chooses the second interpretation, for the sake of dramatic convenience, but also points out that it doesn't really matter: "If the moral shock to Jefferson caused by the discovery of what his own blood was capable of should turn out to be somewhat short of what is here represented, subsequent events in the history of America, of which Jefferson is the spiritual father, might still do the job." The shock of discovery is a permanent American experience: the discovery of the natural and inevitable complicity in evil of those who are most vehemently dedicated to the good. Mr. Warren's Jefferson puts it in the following words, as he looks back on the founding of the Republic:

> ". . . we were only ourselves
> Packed with our own lusts and languors, lost,
> Each man lost, in some blind lobby, hall, enclave,
> Crank cul-de-sac, couloir, or corridor of Time.
> Of Time. Or Self: and in that dark no thread,
> Airy as breath by Ariadne's fingers forged.
> No thread, and beyond some groped-at-corner, hulked
> In the blind dark, hock-deep in ordure, its beard
> And shag foul-scabbled, and when the hoof heaves
> Listen!—the foulness sucks like mire.
> The beast waits. He is the infamy of Crete.
> He is the midnight's enormity. He is
> Our brother, our darling brother. . . ."

Of course, Jefferson is a worldly man, not unacquainted with evil. But up to the time of Lilburne's bloody act, he has known it only in the abstract, not as something mixed in himself. What is more, Lilburne's mad brutality was not a deviation from Jefferson's high ideals, nor even a repudiation of them; rather, there too, as in the flesh, there was kinship. Lilburne, in murdering his Negro slave George, was only trying to accomplish in actuality that radical suppression of sin that Jefferson had rhetorically asserted. Lilburne

> ". . . saw poor George as but his darkest self
> And all the possibility of the dark that he feared."

For Mr. Warren, America is a dark land, because its eyes were blinded at birth by the flash of the Enlightenment. In the end, however, all lands are dark, because all souls are dark; true vision is the perception of this darkness:

> "For nothing we had,
> Nothing we were,
> Is lost.
> All is redeemed,
> In knowledge."

SAUL BELLOW's earlier novels, *Dangling Men* and *The Victim*, were so thickly haunted that only the barest gleams of redemption filtered through. *The Adventures of Augie March* † marks a decisive break, for it achieves a serenity so pure as to be almost eerie in itself. Mr. Bellow has neither turned his back on his demons, nor assaulted them outright; he has, as it were, jumped in their midst, bussed them, and inquired if they had read any good books lately. The effect is exhilarating.

In Augie March, that surd emerging from the muddled formulas of life in lower-middle-class Chicago, rejecting all definitions of himself that the world so magnanimously offers, we have the common man as uncommon hero: "What did Danton lose his head for, or why was there a Napoleon, if it wasn't to make a nobility of us all?" Augie asks, with no artifice. His adventures in life and love, through 536 tightly packed pages, constitute a *Bildungsroman* with no obvious moral, not even an

★ *Brother to Dragons*. By ROBERT PENN WARREN. Eyre and Spottiswoode. 15s.

† *The Adventures of Augie March*. By SAUL BELLOW. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. 15s.

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immoral one. Nor is there much of the conventionally comic: the book's humour is as tense as a piano wire, finely tuned, all gross discord banished. Perhaps this is how the gods see us when they look down, envying our carnal existence from which they are cruelly excluded.

The opening and concluding sentences of the book constitute a new declaration of independence, rather different from Jefferson's:

"I am an American, Chicago born—Chicago, that sombre city—and go at things as I have taught myself, free-style, and will make the record in my own way: first to knock, first admitted; sometimes an innocent knock, sometimes a not so innocent. But a man's character is his fate, says Heraclitus, and in the end there isn't any way to disguise the nature of the knocks by acoustical work on the door or gloving the knuckles."

And, at the end:

"Look at me, going everywhere! Why, I am a sort of Columbus of those near-at-hand and believe you can come to them in this immediate *terra incognita* that spreads out in every gaze. I may well be a flop at this line of endeavour. Columbus too thought he was a flop, probably, when they sent him back in chains. Which didn't prove there was no America."

The keynote is acceptance. *Non ridere, non lugere, neque detestare.* . . . Or as Augie puts it, in the midst of a crumbling love-affair:

"Everyone tries to create a world he can live in, and what he can't use he often can't see. But the real world is already created, and if your fabrication doesn't correspond, then even if you feel noble and insist on there being something better than what people call reality, that better something needn't try to exceed what, in its actuality, since we know it so little, may be very surprising. If a happy state of things, surprising; if miserable or tragic, no worse than what we invent."

*Irving Kristol*

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## THE SHAPING OF HISTORY

On the face of it, *The Members of the Long Parliament** may seem to be a specialist's book and in one sense it is so. It requires of the reader more than a nodding acquaintance with the 17th century and more than an amateur's interest in history. It is a book for those who are concerned with the history of political institutions and of the English Parliament in particular. But, for two reasons, it is also a book of general importance.

The first reason is the subject. The Long Parliament, which met at Westminster in November 1640, contrived during the next eighteen months to effect a constitutional revolution of immense importance. By highly ingenious and intelligent legislation it destroyed the independent authority of the Crown and

* *The Members of the Long Parliament.* By D. Brunton and D. H. Pennington. George Allen and Unwin. 21s.

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EDITED BY PETER QUENNELL AND ALAN HODGE

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brought into being a parliamentary monarchy. This revolution outlasted the Civil War which ensued and so established a type of parliamentary government which has since been widely imitated. The Long Parliament therefore has more than antiquarian interest. Its members, in the vulgar phrase, started something.

*The Members of the Long Parliament* is an analysis of these men, their background and their politics. This choice of treatment is the second reason for the book's importance, for it illustrates a relatively new and important phase in historical studies. Older, traditional history over-emphasised the significance, not so much of the individual, as of the Great Man. The reaction against this attitude, though just in itself, has grown oppressive. History became a matter of trends and movements. Biography was—and still is in some quarters—regarded as an inferior and even vicious form of work; the study of social and economic forces alone seemed respectable. Much valuable work was inspired by this impersonal approach but, like the earlier over-personal approach, it has its dangers.

Once historians begin to think in terms of "the rise of the middle classes" or "the decline of the wool trade" they are quite as apt to attribute too much to "the rise of the middle classes" or "the decline of the wool trade" as their predecessors were to attribute too much to George Washington or Queen Elizabeth. They may be just as wrong.

Theories about history are useful servants but dangerous masters. To make a coherent shape from the muddled facts which we pick up in our researches, it is usually necessary to have some sort of a theory, or rather a hypothesis. "Let us suppose," says the historian, "that at this epoch the bourgeoisie were achieving political power . . ."—and at once this supposition gives significance to a number of incoherent facts. This enables him to go further, to find out more. But he must remember that his purpose is not to confirm his hypothesis but to find out the truth, even if it means, on further enquiry, abandoning the hypothesis which helped him so much at the outset and which seemed so hopeful. It is easy to forget this and to become, unconsciously, susceptible to those facts alone which fit the hypothesis, and to resist all others. Few of the great historians fail in this way: they are tentative in their claims and aware of the exceptions which threaten their theories. But their pupils, and above all the political popularisers of history, propagate theories and generalisations with enthusiasm and frequently with little enquiry into the scholarly evidence behind them.

The inevitable reaction has now set in, the reaction from the impersonal to the personal, but this time not to the Great Man, but to the innumerable small men, some of whose lives can be seen through the microscope of scholarship. This process, brilliantly applied by Sir Lewis Namier to 18th century Parliamentary politics, has now been applied by Mr. Brunton* and Mr. Pennington to the Long Parliament.

THE Long Parliament, and the Civil War between King and Parliament which it precipitated, have been the plaything of theorists. Reacting from the old romantic vision of dauntless Hampden resisting ship-

* Douglas Brunton died just before the completion of the book. His early death is a grave loss to English historical scholarship.

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money, of Cromwell fighting for the Bible and Charles I dying for the Prayer Book, of a war for political and religious liberty, we have been treated instead to the theory that the War was a conflict between a feudal aristocracy and a rising bourgeoisie or that it was engineered by a group of greedy capitalists who resented the premature attempts of Charles I to establish the Welfare State.

Mr. Brunton and Mr. Pennington have dispassionately analysed the Long Parliament, have observed which members voted which way, which went over to the King, which stayed at Westminster. What do they find? They find nothing which sustains any existing theory or suggests any new one. They find that members did not divide into Royalist and Roundhead according to their social class; some of the principal feudal lords were strong Parliament men. Many of the rising bourgeoisie joined the King. Merchants, landowners, lawyers, sons of noblemen—they split up indifferently between the parties. The only difference between Parliamentarians and Royalists that emerges at all is that the average age of the Parliamentarians was ten years older than that of their opponents. They do not even find that men from particular regions were predominantly of one side or the other.

Can it really be that the older, more heroic view of the Civil War was right, and that men were actuated after all by personal convictions rather than by their social and economic interests? It begins to look very like it. But the authors make one more suggestion. We have, they think, been looking at this matter too broadly: members of the Long Parliament came into the great conflict with opinions and emotions generated by local politics, local jealousies, family connections. If we can examine more of these, gather together more and more information about the individual lives and local politics, we may learn at last something of "the little pushings and pullings from which the forces of the great conflict were made."

The immediate interest of this book is for 17th century historians, but its importance transcends the 17th century. What was true then is not untrue today. In spite of the far more highly organised political systems of our own time and the possibilities of mass suggestion, the multitudinous reactions of individuals still have an effect. We too easily theorise; we too easily see ourselves as part of a trend or a movement. The corrective which is being applied to historical studies needs to be applied to current political thought as well.

Mr. Maurice Ashley's book *Cromwell's Generals* * aims at a more general public but his lively sketches of the men round Cromwell provide interesting examples of the way in which individual character and convictions counted—as they still count—in the taking of sides and the forming of policy. England's unique experiment in republican government is here seen through the practical experience of the men who created it, criticised it, and sustained it. The book ends with an excellent study of General Monck, who, seeing that the Republic had outlived its usefulness, expeditiously and efficiently overthrew it.

*C. V. Wedgwood*

* *Cromwell's Generals*. By MAURICE ASHLEY. Cape. 21s.

## CATHOLIC WRITERS

"WHAT I have done," writes Mr. O'Donnell, estimating the first eight essays in this book,* "is to consider, in turn, the work of eight writers who are Catholics, and to attempt in each case to follow the central imaginative pattern of the work." The eight writers are Mauriac, Bernanos, Bloy, Greene, O'Faolain, Waugh, Claudel, and Péguy, and each, "in turn," is submitted to an astute and fascinating scrutiny. Mr. O'Donnell is not one of those, alas too frequent, Catholic critics who seem to assume that being a Catholic or expressing Catholic sentiments is necessarily any qualification for being an artist; indeed, he sometimes seems to imply that the reverse is more often the case; nor, on

* *Maria Cross*. Imaginative Patterns in a Group of Modern Catholic Writers. By DONAT O'DONNELL. Chatto & Windus. 21s.

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the other hand, is he one of those, also alas too frequent, "materialist" critics who regard a work of art as little more than a refined, skilful, and elaborate game "of which the ivory pieces are put away when the serious business of 'living' is resumed." He recognises that art in any proper sense of the word is not a game and that the writers he is considering do not treat it as such. They are, as he points out, "all in some degree 'practical' men"; that is, they enter actively through their work into the political arena, they are concerned with the conditions of their times. Indeed, it is their awareness of and their response to these conditions that to a great extent determines those patterns in their work which Mr. O'Donnell traces: Mauriac's preoccupation with what, in an odd phrase, he calls "the Catholic universe of evil"; Bernanos' grappling with the devil and the devil's disguise, the Faustian intellect in its last and most appalling throes; Mr. Greene's "anatomy of pity"; Mr. O'Faolain's struggle to reconcile an intense love of an Ireland that is her own religion with his knowledge that it is a different religion, Catholicism, which has moulded Ireland's "racial" character and her only living traditional institution, the Church; Mr. Waugh's rearguard action on behalf of a romantic snobbish piety against the new barbarian, "the travelling salesman with his polygonal pince-nez, his fat wet handshake, his grinning dentures"; and so on, to Bloy's annunciation that the Cossacks and the Holy Ghost are at hand. Mr. O'Donnell writes succinctly, illuminatingly, and with verve; one does not of course agree with all his judgements, nor share all his prejudices—that against Eastern religions, for instance; but reading him is, as the "blurb" says, a thought-provoking and enriching experience.

Indeed, from one point of view, it is the questions that Mr. O'Donnell provokes but does not discuss in this book that are some of the best things about it. The first of them is that which concerns the whole relationship of literature and dogma, or, more precisely in this case, the whole relationship between the demand of the creative writer to remain true to his own experience of life and the equally valid demand that, as a Catholic, he discipline his expression in obedience to the teachings of his Church, i.e. that he does not promote through his work what this Church considers to be sin and error. Of course, the problem of reconciling the one demand with the other will vary according to the temperament of the writer concerned. In the case of Claudel, for instance, as Mr. O'Donnell points out, there does not seem to be any clash between the writer's own intellect and the teachings of the Church: the former is entirely conjoined to and functions at its best in the medium of the latter. It is when there is not this happy alliance that the difficulty arises. Mauriac's finest novels, from *Le Baiser au lepreux* to *Destins*, are not orthodox. His later ones are, but they come a very poor second to his earlier work; and at least part of the reason for Mauriac's decline was, according to Mr. O'Donnell, that he accepted "an intellectual, and therefore false, solution to an emotional dilemma"—in other words, he sacrificed his own emotional experience of life to an orthodox but, from the point of view of that experience, impersonal conception of truth. In Mauriac's case, then, it would seem that obedience to Catholic moral precepts has impoverished the artist. This would support the contention of Bloy and others that there can be no such thing as Christian art. If this is in fact so, it is a terrible indictment of Christianity. A religion which frustrates man's creative energies in the end destroys his whole spiritual life; and if Christianity is such a religion, it is, quite simply, an enemy of what it claims to protect.

Another question which Mr. O'Donnell raises but does not discuss is related to the first. "There should be," he writes, "no opposition between the recognition of the existence of an obsessive situation in a writer's work, and the recognition of the work's spiritual value." Mr. O'Donnell analyses several such obsessive situations, and in more than one case the spiritual value of the work appears very suspect. Take, for instance, Mr. Greene's *The Heart of the Matter*. According to Mr. O'Donnell's excellent analysis of this book, its hero, Scobie, is the portrait of someone who in the "sunsets of the last years of Christendom" still tries to carry out Christ's command to love. He cannot achieve it. The most he can achieve is a sort of pity, which, in his case, is "an emotional loyalty to his own childhood, as well as a generalisation of that loyalty by an ability to discern and cherish childhood subsisting in others." It is this concern for childhood that is the "obsessive situation" in *The Heart of the Matter*. What, then, is the

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work's spiritual value? We may enjoy reading the book, but a "spiritual value," if it is anything, must be something that exists apart from our individual likes and dislikes; and in this case, as in other cases that Mr. O'Donnell cites, it is difficult to avoid the suspicion that the work, while it may be emotionally disturbing, is also a spiritual hoax.

THE question at issue here really amounts to this: does a work of art that is emotionally true—true, that is, to the writer's emotional experience of life—necessarily have any spiritual value at all? It is a question which concerns practically all novel-writing and a great deal of the poetry of, anyhow, the last 150 years, and it becomes peculiarly pressing as one reads Mr. O'Donnell's final essay, in which he seeks to trace a pattern common to the work of all the eight writers he is considering. There is, he argues, a community of feeling between these writers which links them in spite of their great differences. First of all, they share a sense of exile, of exile in the modern rational world, and from the state of childhood. They all look back to a past, real or imaginary, by contrast with which the present is a kind of hell. They are all in revolt against reason and its domination over the passions. They represent an attack of the forces of imagination (here, as in several other places, it would be more correct to read "emotion" for "imagination") on the whole "reasonable" position. By connecting carnal passion with the Passion of Christ, they reach an acceptance of the cross. The cross for them is sentient, is, in fact, woman: "The concept of woman as the cross is here the focus round which the imagination Christianises itself." Through their acceptance of the cross and in a similar way of other Catholic mysteries, they are able to communicate to others what otherwise might have been merely private suffering.

Now, if we accept Mr. O'Donnell's argument, we get a situation which can be stated like this: both the cross and other Catholic mysteries have a precise, ascertainable, and generally forgotten spiritual significance. The writers under discussion use this symbolic language not with that significance but to express private emotions which may be psychologically interesting, or stir the feelings, or which we may enjoy reading about simply because, as Mr. O'Donnell puts it, humanity enjoys tormenting itself; in other words, they use this language not to evoke a spiritual comprehension but to communicate an emotional pattern and to stimulate an emotional response. Now this is obviously not altogether true of all, if indeed of any, of the eight writers under consideration, and it certainly applies less to Bloy, Claudel, and Bernanos, for instance, than to the others; but in so far as it is true, the question of value shapes itself somewhat as follows: what value, in spiritual terms, has all this communication and stimulation of emotion which, for the sake of convenience almost, focuses round certain traditional symbols, but in so doing dissociates these symbols from their spiritual meaning?

As I said, Mr. O'Donnell does not discuss either this or other similar questions that he provokes in his book, and, as a literary critic, his competence does not cover them. Perhaps he will take them up in another work; if he does, and if it maintains the standard of this one, it will be worth reading.

*Philip Sherrard*

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Readers of ENCOUNTER will be interested to know that the article by EDWIN MUIR, "Dresden, Hellerau, and Vienna", in the June issue, will be included in his autobiography, to be published by the Hogarth Press in the autumn. . . . DYLAN THOMAS'S "Reminiscences of Childhood" will appear in the collected volume of his works, *Quite Early One Morning*, which Dent will bring out in September. It is published here for the first time. . . . "The Love of Women" by LOUIS MACNEICE is the eleventh canto of *Autumn Sequel*, to be published by Faber and Faber in the autumn. . . . DANIEL J. BOORSTIN is Professor of History at the University of Chicago. . . . JACK CURTIS lives at Big Sur, California. . . . STEPHEN W. POLLAK is the author of *Strange Land Behind Me*, published in 1951 by Falcon Press. . . . VILEM BERNARD was a deputy in the Prague Parliament, and is now Secretary-General of the Socialist Union of Central and Eastern Europe. . . . VERNON SCANNELL'S poems have been broadcast on the Third Programme. . . . LUCIAN FREUD is one of the three painters included in the British pavilion at this summer's Biennale in Venice. His essay is a revised version of a talk given on the Third Programme. . . . MRS. S. RAJEE, under the pseudonym of "Andal," is one of the leading Indian writers in the Tamil tongue. . . . ERIK DE MAUNY works in the BBC's Foreign News Department. . . . A. J. AYER is Professor of Philosophy at London University. . . . PHILIP SHERRARD is at present working on a series of studies of Greek poets of the last two centuries.

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